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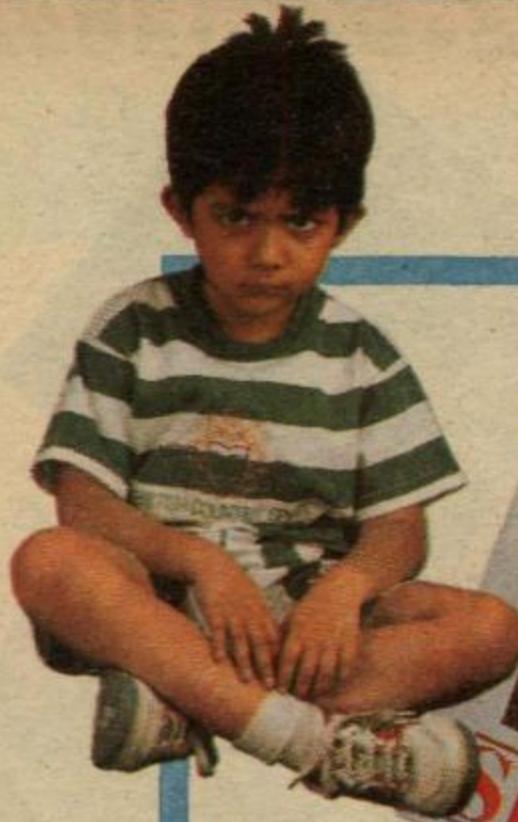
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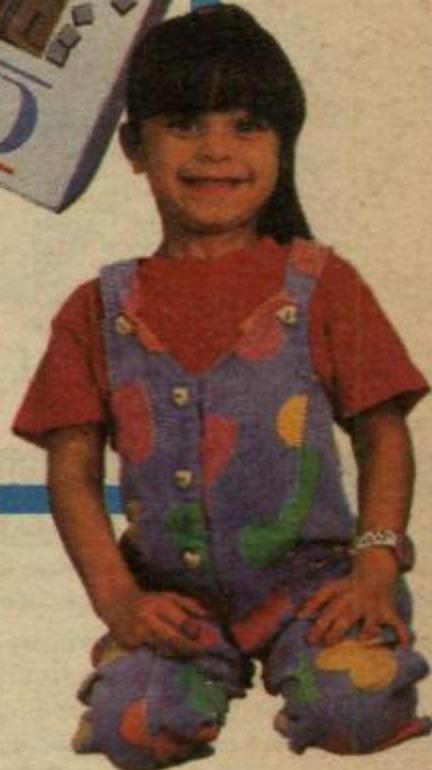
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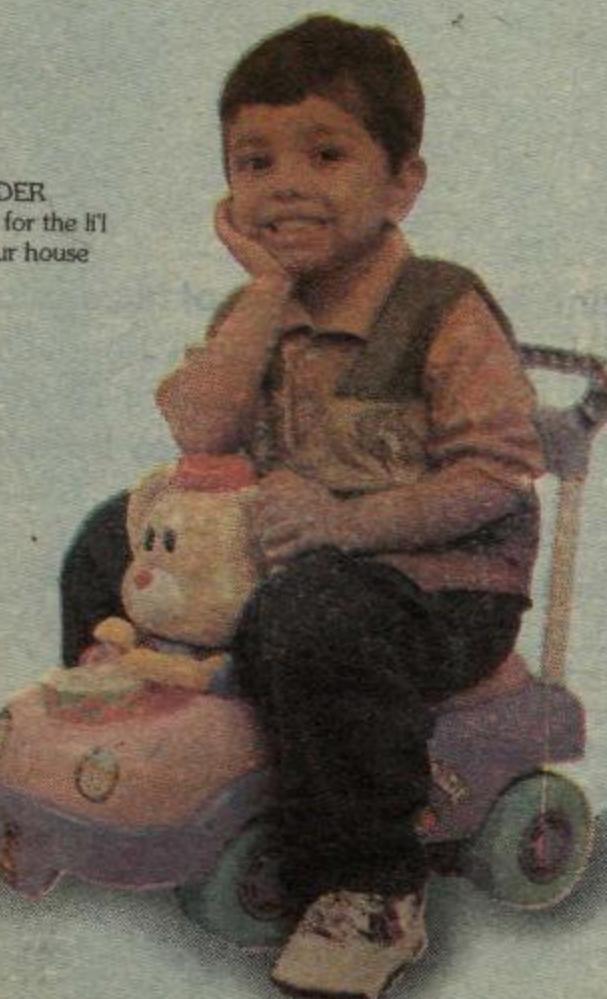
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IN THIS ISSUE

Vol. 26 JULY 1995 No. 1

Stories

The Seven Voyages Of Sindbad Page 19
Stories From Mahabharata - 10 ... Page 28
Freaks Of Fortune Page 37
Three Conditions Page 41
King Raghavendra - 5 Page 51
Not An Eyesore Page 61

Picture Stories :

Panchatantra-55 Page 14

Chandamama Pull-Out :

Forts Of India - 7 ...Page 33

Features :

News Flash Page 12

Sports : Yesterday, Today,
Tomorrow Page 40

A Mini-India Across The
Atlantic Page 13

Supplement - 81 Page 47

Also: Towards Better English

NEXT ISSUE

Vol. 26 AUGUST 1995 No. 2

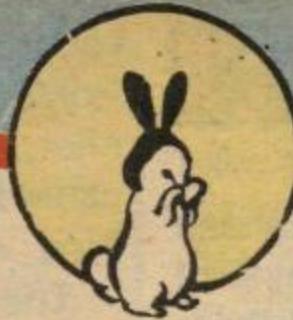
SEVEN VOYAGES OF SINDBAD : Sindbad's mother allows him to utilise the money he made from the first voyage to buy merchandise in case he contemplates another voyage. He meets the merchants he had befriended and they encourage him to go with them again. During the second voyage, they come upon an island full of trees, fruits and flowers. Sindbad is left out and the ship sails away. He takes shelter under a huge egg and manages to get himself flown to the snake-infested Diamond Valley where adventures wait for him.

IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD : Kanakaraj is a miser and will not spend money even to treat his ailing father. Neighbour Basavaraj tries to advise him as well as his wife and children, but to no avail. They go about accusing Basavaraj of crimes he has not committed. He becomes desperate and contemplates doing away with Kanakaraj. Being a devout, he goes to the temple and prays before he does the heinous act. He is surprised when god takes the form of a young man and accompanies him. Does Kanakaraj become his victim?

PLUS another story from the **MAHABHARATA**, besides the pull-out **FORTS OF INDIA**, and the comics serial **PANCHATANTRA**.

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Founder
CHAKRAPANI

Controlling Editor :
NAGI REDDI

POLITICS IN SCHOOLS

A new academic year has started, expecting the students to immerse themselves in studies. Most schools have the system—of student-monitors in classes and a School Prefect—which is intended to help children imbibe leadership qualities.

A monitor is chosen by the class teacher, who is the best person to make an assessment of his wards for this purpose. A School Prefect is chosen by the Principal in consultation with the members of his or her staff and on the basis of the student's performance in the class as well as on the playground and behaviour with other students. The monitors and the Prefect are both given certain responsibilities and enjoy some rights or privileges. The system, on the face of it, can and should run smoothly—unless, of course, forces and influences from outside the four walls of the school start playing a role in the selection method.

It is true, during the country's freedom struggle, the student community was called upon to join the fight. They were led by the nationalist parties and their leaders. After Independence, the political arena in the country saw the advent of a multiplicity of parties, who began prompting students to take "active interest in politics" and exerting their influence on school and college 'elections'—all of which have, of late, reached undesirable heights. Two schools in Kerala, affected by such 'politics', recently conducted a survey among the parents. With the help of a 7-point questionnaire, the schools asked them whether they would like their children to "take part in politics". We are told that none of them, including MLAs and other active politicians, voted in favour of political activity among students. After the survey results were revealed, parents in Kerala in general have come forward to support the verdict. It is time political parties took their hands off students, allowing them more time and energy to concentrate on their studies. Entry of politics in educational institutions is neither necessary nor advisable.

NEWS FLASH

With flying colours

They were born triplets – Mahesh and Manoj and their sister, Maya, of Ernakulam, Kerala. All three of them appeared for the Kerala S.S.L.C. exam this year and all came out in First Class – the boys securing distinction. They went in for combined study to



prepare themselves for the exam, though Maya, who studied in a girls school, had a different time table. Their mother is a Professor of Statistics and father an Accounts Officer with a government undertaking.

Space endurance

For the U.S.A., it was a record, when astronaut Norman Thagard spent his 85th day in space on June 6. The earlier record for an astronaut was 84 days 1 hour 16 minutes, set by three of them in 1974. As you know, for any space endurance record, one has to be on board the Russian space station, 'Mir.' Norman Thagard will remain in space till July, when another astronaut will take his place in 'Mir', and he himself will be brought back to earth. Whoever astronaut goes to 'Mir', he or she may not stay up there to beat the

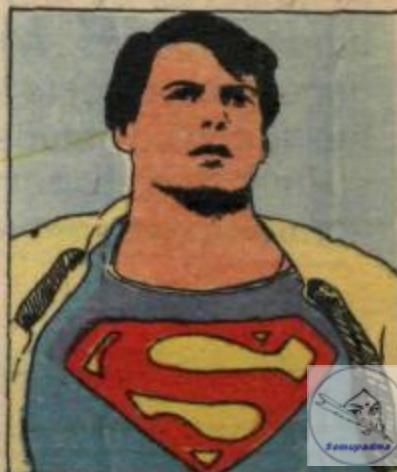
record held by cosmonaut Valery Polyakov who returned to earth only after spending 439 days in orbit. He came back in March.

Not only wood...

The woodpeckers are so called because it is their habit to peck at the bark of trees, and nobody has ever heard of these birds pecking at anything else – that is, till a pair of woodpeckers were, the other day, seen pecking at nothing other than the insulation material over the fuel tank of the U.S. spaceshuttle "Discovery". The two birds were able to poke quite a few holes – some of them even 10 cm in diameter – forcing the Kennedy Space Center authorities to postpone the launching of the spacecraft. On close examination, it was also found that the birds had built their nest on the launch pad!

A superman still

Avid readers of comics must be familiar with the Superman stories. And some of them must have seen Christopher Reeve enact the role of the super hero in films. In either the comics or the movies, Superman never sustains a fall from heights. But Christopher Reeve met with an accident – a fall from a horse – in the last week of May and had to be hospitalised, for he had broken his neck. Doctors were doubtful whether he would recover at all, but the latest reports assure us that he is out of danger.



A mini-India across the Atlantic

Our President, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, recently visited a Caribbean country – Trinidad and Tobago—where he was the Guest of Honour at the Indian Arrival Day. The three-day celebrations beginning May 30 marked the 150th anniversary of the arrival of Indians in this part of the world, exactly on May 30, 1845.

History tells us that Christopher Columbus, who "discovered" America, had reached the island of Trinidad, off the east coast of South America, in 1498. Soon after that, it was made a colony of Spain, which ceded it to Britain in 1802. Britain had acquired the nearby island of Tobago, and the two were joined together as one colony in 1809.

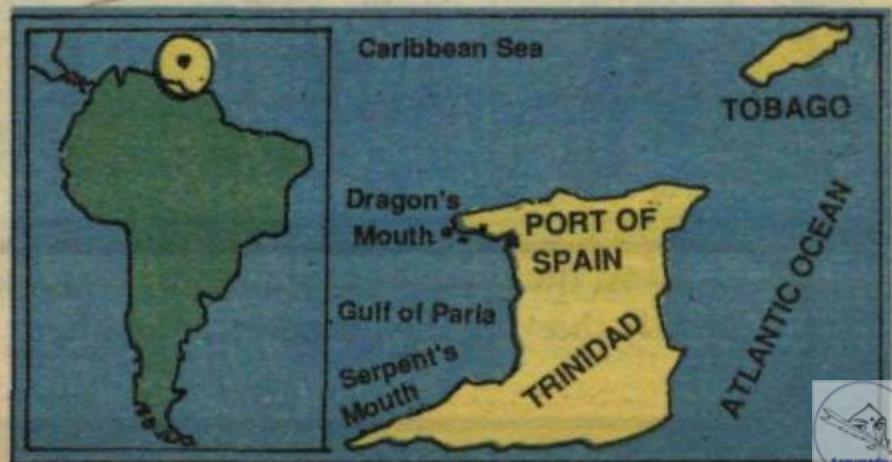
The two islands abounded in sugar plantations and their British owners wanted people to work for them. By then, the British were ruling India and they decided to recruit labour from the eastern parts—like Calcutta and Chhota-Nagpur. Some 230 of them were put on board a ship called "Fatal Rozack" at Calcutta. Looking frail and emaciated after a tiresome voyage, which took them to an uncertain future, they landed at the Coolie Depot on Nelson Island, a little away from the present capital, Port of Spain. They were the pioneers. For the

next 70 years, similar recruitment went on and people from U.P., Bihar, and also the south soon joined their countrymen from the east. The British also brought in labourers from their colonies in Africa.

The situation now is such that the nearly 2,000,000 population of Trinidad and Tobago is almost equally divided between people of Indian and African origin.

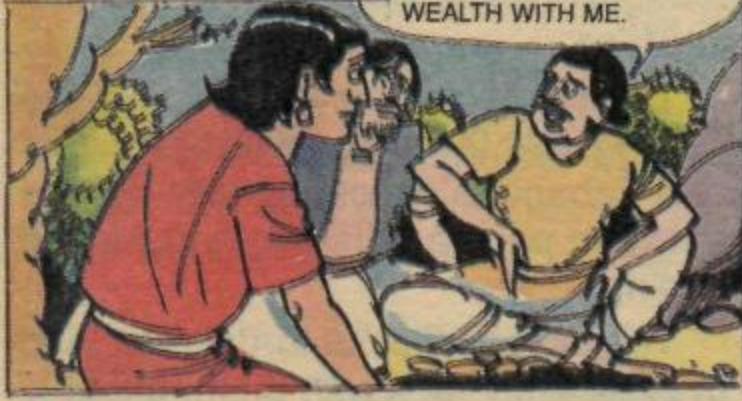
The Indians did not forget their land of birth. They took with them, not only their small bundle of clothes, but their language, religion, customs, music, and food habits. Sizeable sections of the people of Trinidad and Tobago speak Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali, and the four South Indian languages. Even such dialects as Bhojpuri, Maithili, Santhali, and Nepali are common. It is also not surprising that one comes across place names such as Mathura, Lucknow, Kanpur, Chandernagore, Madras, Malabar, Delhi Road, and Golconda.

President Noor Hassanali, who is a descendant of the first batch of labourers who were taken to Trinidad, said : "Though oceans do separate us, our hearts have remained close." Our own President described Trinidad and Tobago as "India, heart to heart."



ANOTHER QUILL DROPS TO THE GROUND—AND THEY DIG THERE.

AH! IT'S ALL SILVER! HOW LUCKY I AM! YOU MAY SHARE THIS WEALTH WITH ME.



NO! WE GO ON.



I STILL SAY LET'S SHARE THIS BE CONTENT WITH THIS.



THE OTHER TWO FRIENDS PROCEED ON THEIR JOURNEY.

AFTER SOME TIME, ANOTHER QUILL FALLS...



Even the thought of sin is sin; therefore, one should not think of craftily thieving the property of another.

— Thirukkural



THE LAST OF THE FORTUNE-SEEKERS CONTINUES HIS JOURNEY. DAY AND NIGHT, HE TRUDGES ON AND ON, WEARY AND THIRSTY.

THE SUN IS SO SCORCHING OH!



I'M DREADFULLY THIRSTY... WATER... WATER! I DON'T FIND WATER ANYWHERE!

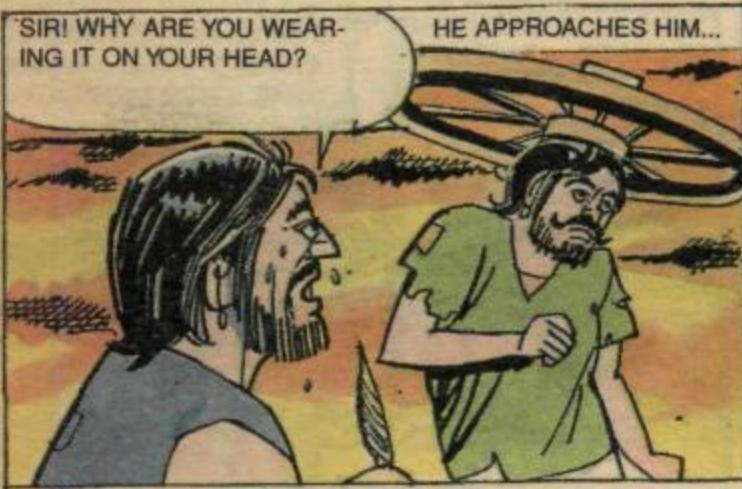


AFTER SOME TIME, HE SEES A MAN WITH A WHEEL. IT WAS TURNING ROUND AND ROUND ON HIS HEAD.



SIR! WHY ARE YOU WEARING IT ON YOUR HEAD?

HE APPROACHES HIM...



CAN I FIND WATER ANYWHERE HERE TO QUENCH MY THIRST?

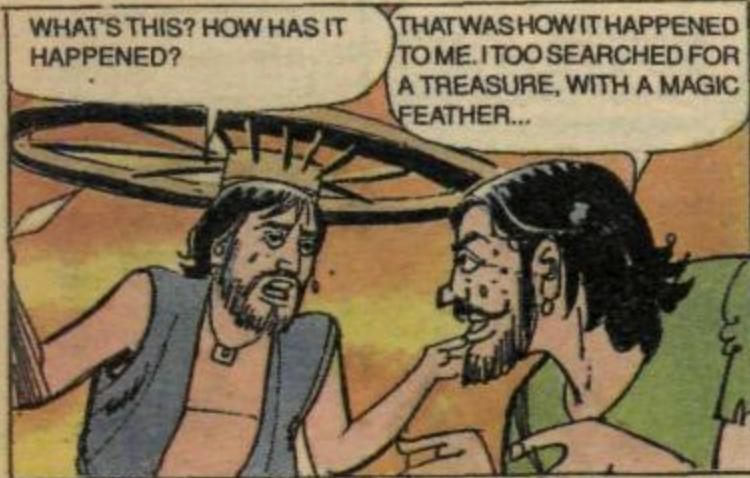


THE MOMENT HE UTTERED THE WORDS THE WHEEL SHIFTED TO HIS HEAD AND WHIRLED.



WHAT'S THIS? HOW HAS IT HAPPENED?

THAT WAS HOW IT HAPPENED TO ME. I TOO SEARCHED FOR A TREASURE, WITH A MAGIC FEATHER...



... AND FOUND A MAN ON WHOSE HEAD THE WHEEL WAS ROTATING. I WAS THIRSTY AND ASKED HIM WHERE I COULD FIND WATER. AT ONCE THE WHEEL SETTLED ON MY HEAD!



I CAN'T BEAR IT! HOW CAN I GET RID OF THIS WHEEL OF TORTURE?

YOU WILL HAVE TO WAIT.



Not to fear what ought to be feared is folly. The wise fear what should be feared.



OH, NO! I CAN'T BEAR IT! MY GOD! SAVE ME!



YOU'VE TO WAIT FOR ANOTHER GREEDY MAN TO COME ALONG WITH A MAGIC FEATHER.

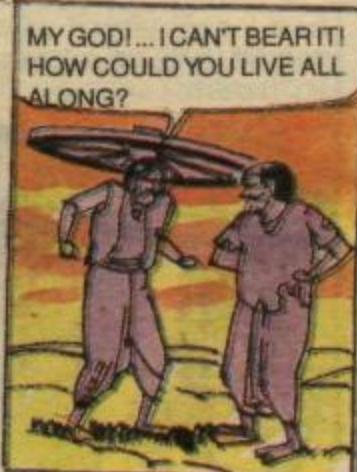


HOW LONG DID YOU ENDURE THIS TORTURE?



I CAN'T SAY. PERHAPS A FEW CENTURIES...

MY GOD!... I CAN'T BEAR IT! HOW COULD YOU LIVE ALL ALONE?



THE GOD OF WEALTH HAS DECREED THAT THE WHEEL-BEARER SHALL LIVE WITHOUT FOOD AND WATER!

THAT'S HOW HE PUNISHES ANYONE WHO DARES GRAB HIS WEALTH.



GOOD-BYE! I SHALL GO HOME NOW!

PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME! PLEASE HELP ME!



MEANWHILE, THE MAN WHO GOT GOLD, WAITED FOR HIS FRIEND. HE GOES IN SEARCH OF HIM.



221

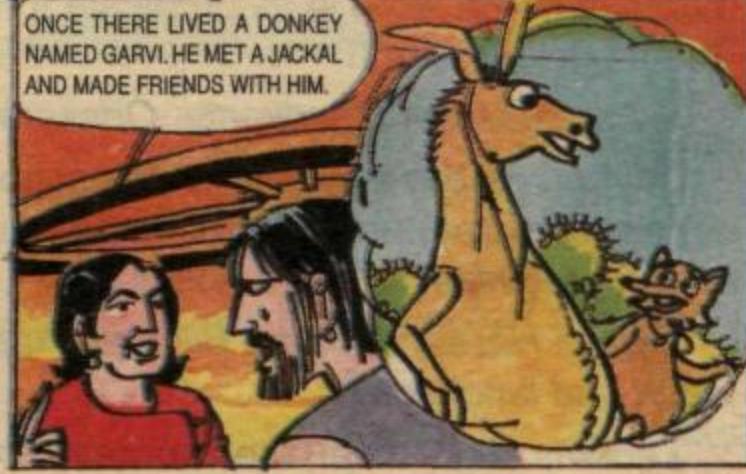
Although the elephant has a large body, and a sharp tusk, yet it fears the attack of the tiger.



THE GOLD FINDER TRAVELS DAY AND NIGHT IN SEARCH OF HIS FRIEND. AND...



YOU DIDN'T HEED MY ADVICE AND YOUR GREED GOADED YOU ON TO THIS MISERABLE CONDITION.



ONE MOONLIT NIGHT...



If a fool happens to get immense wealth, his neighbours will enjoy it, while his own relations will starve.



A FORM OF PUBLICITY

Rita Ved, of Indore (M.P.) writes: I recently read this sentence: "In U.S.A. and Japan professors are supposed to canvass for their projects which bring in more money to them as well as to the University." The meanings given in the dictionary (solicit votes, orders, etc.) do not help me in understanding the real significance of the word.

Through canvassing, you can also solicit opinion, say from a group of people; you can also engage (people) in debate or discussion (*Random House Dictionary*). Here, the professors are expected to elicit opinion about their projects so that individuals or companies or groups of people will come forward to finance the projects if they are convinced of their utility. According to *Random*, the original meaning of the word in its predicate form was 'tossing someone in a canvass'. Some publicity stunt!

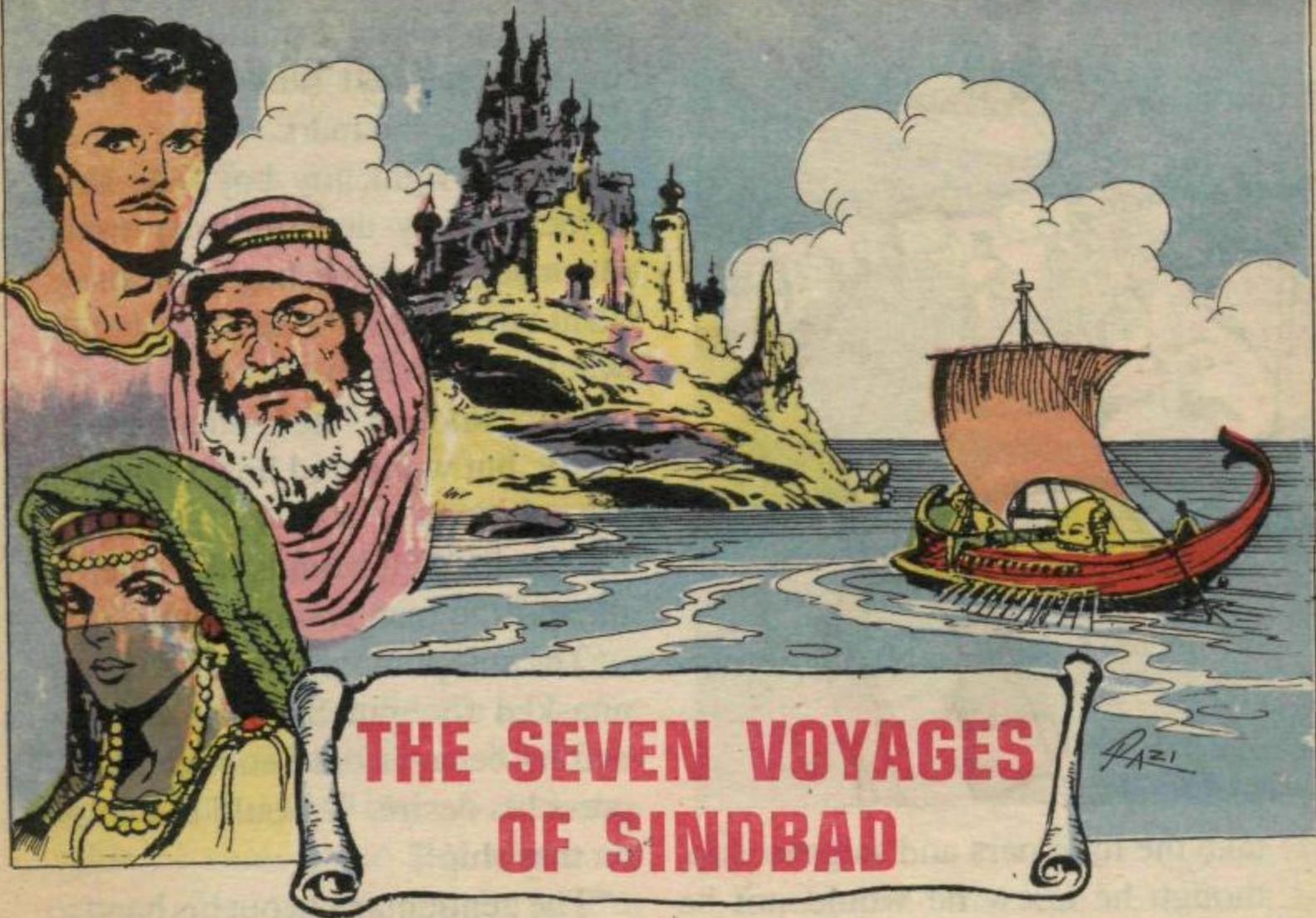
P. Parameswar, Dhenkanal, Orissa: Who is a 'day girl'?

Day-girl or day-boy, like a day-scholar, attends a day-school (school held during – the day) and returns home – unlike the students who stay back in the school premises, say, in a hostel.

Samiul Hassan Quadri, Bikaner, Rajasthan: What is the difference between lunch and luncheon?

Lunch is a light meal taken between breakfast and dinner. Luncheon means the same. However, these days the word has assumed an additional connotation to mean lunch served during a meeting – like "The alumni association held a luncheon meeting" or 'met at luncheon'. As it will be a meeting during lunch time, the food may be served while the meeting goes on or after the meeting.





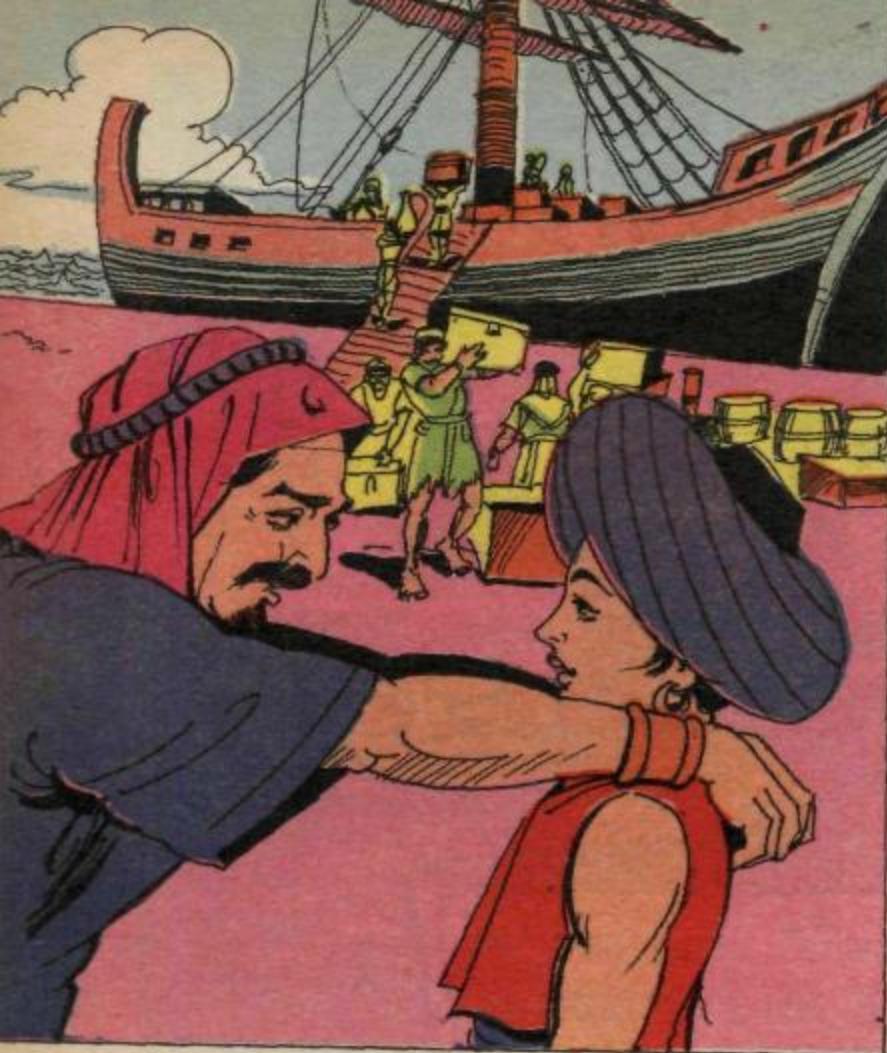
THE SEVEN VOYAGES OF SINDBAD

Having assured himself that the wealthy Sindbad had not taken amiss of what he said about rich people and their unconcern for the poor, Hindbad the porter accepted the famous sailor's invitation to stay back in his palatial house and listen to his narration. As they relaxed in the portico with a *hookah*, which was filled at frequent intervals by his servants, Sindbad began unfolding the adventures he went through during his first voyage.

He was then only fifteen years

of age. As he and his widowed mother stayed near the sea, the young boy would often stray up to the waterfront and watch ships being unloaded and loaded just before they set sail on their long voyages. The sight of the ships – big and small – putting out to sea always thrilled Sindbad and kindled his spirit of adventure. He thought and thought how he could travel on one such ship.

He was still a young boy and his hands were not strong enough to



take the long oars and sail the ship, though he knew he would not be alone and there would be many others to help him. He went about making enquiries with the people he met on the waterfront.

One of them was Suhairal-Bakr, who was introduced to young Sindbad as a leading merchant of Bagdad. "Salaam alekum!" The man turned round to see a boy bowing low and respectfully touching his forehead three times. "Yes, young man! What can I do for you?"

"Sir, will you be going on that ship?" Sindbad pointed at a medium-sized boat to which his ser-

vants one behind the other were taking bundles and sacks. His guess was not off the mark.

"That's right, my boy," he said, affectionately and not very much surprised over the boy's curiosity. "But who're you? And what do you want to know?"

"I'm Sindbad," he replied courteously, but wondered how to broach the subject.

"Sindbad? It sounds like a hero's name," the man commented.

The compliment, which had come unasked for, put Sindbad at ease, and he became bold enough to express his desire. "I would like to go on that ship!"

The gentleman put out his hand to touch the boy's shoulders and smiled. "Do you know where that ship is going? What it carries and who'll go on board? Also when it will come back?"

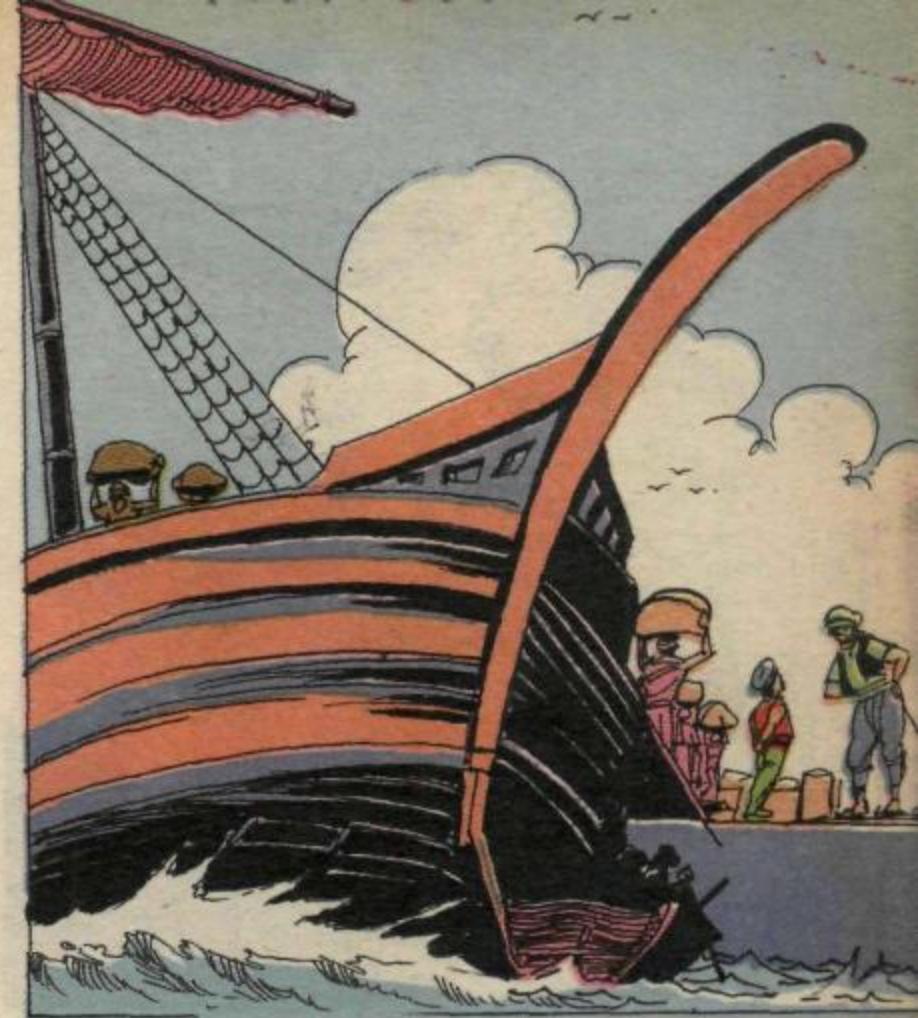
Sindbad was dumbstruck. He did not have the answers to any of those questions. "You're too small to know all that," said the gentleman, now resting the other hand on Sindbad's shoulders. "I shall tell you. Listen. That boat is going to the Persian Gulf in the east. It is carrying a lot of merchandise. The entire lot is not mine. There are



other merchants also taking their wares on the ship after paying rent to the owner. We merchants have hired the ship and we'll come back when we've sold all our stuff. We'll be stopping at several ports like Baghdad, and we may not come back for several days together. Can you be away from home for such a long time?"

"Sir, my father ... he died when I was very small. I've only my mother. I'll take her permission and I'm sure she won't object to my going. I shall ask her to give me some money to give to the ship's owner and also to buy a few things which I shall try to sell wherever we go. Let me try my luck. But how much time do I have to get ready for the voyage?"

"Oh! We're six and we should be loading the ship in a day or two," the man explained. "But you must meet the owner as early as possible, otherwise the ship may not have space to keep the stuff you bring. When you meet him, he'll tell you how much load you can take. And make your purchases accordingly. So, run, and do as I told you. I've to go now and check whether all my things are in one place and the porters have not scattered them." The man then hur-



ried away.

Sindbad did not lose a moment after that. He made some more enquiries and was told that he would find the owner near the ship and that he was wearing a patch over one of his eyes. The boy had no difficulty in locating him at the seaside. When Sindbad revealed his intention, he too smiled. And when he told him who his father was, the man said, "I knew him well." He then asked Sindbad how many sacks and boxes he intended taking with him.

"Not many, sir," replied Sindbad, unsure of himself. "I've to seek my





mother's permission, and it'll depend on how much money she'll give me."

The ship owner took pity on the boy. "You buy all that you can, with whatever money your mother gives you, and get on the ship!"

Sindbad wondered why the man avoided telling him how much rent he should be paid. He appeared to read the boy's mind. "Sindbad, I shall tell you how much you must pay me after you come back. You'll be going for the first time, and there's plenty to learn in all these matters. Now, there's not much time to lose. You should not delay the

departure of the ship. It may move out tomorrow, as more ships are expected to reach here the day after for loading. Lucky, you'll be sailing in my ship."

Sindbad made a beeline for his house, where his long absence had not been noticed, because it had become his habit to disappear from home for long hours. But when he confronted his mother with his proposal, she was surprised. "Money, I'll give you, Sindbad, but I'll miss you very much when you're gone, my son!"

The boy consoled his mother that he was going on a ship owned by one of his father's friends, he would be safe in the company of other traders, he would learn business from them and, when he grew up, he too would become a wealthy merchant like them.

The proud woman knew that she would be unable to put restrictions on the boy but he was capable of looking after himself.

With the money she gave him, Sindbad went about buying things, like perfume, silk robes, handicrafts, and other items for which, he thought, there would be buyers everywhere. He had seen how the merchandise was packed and labelled. When his packets were



ready, he had them taken to the boat. He then took leave of his mother and went and waited at the seaside for the other traders to join him.

Soon they arrived and they all got into a small boat to be rowed to the bigger ship. They climbed onto it with the help of a rope ladder. Once they were all inside, the captain gave the signal for the anchor to be raised. There was a strong wind and the oarsmen did not have much difficulty in guiding the ship to the middle of the sea.

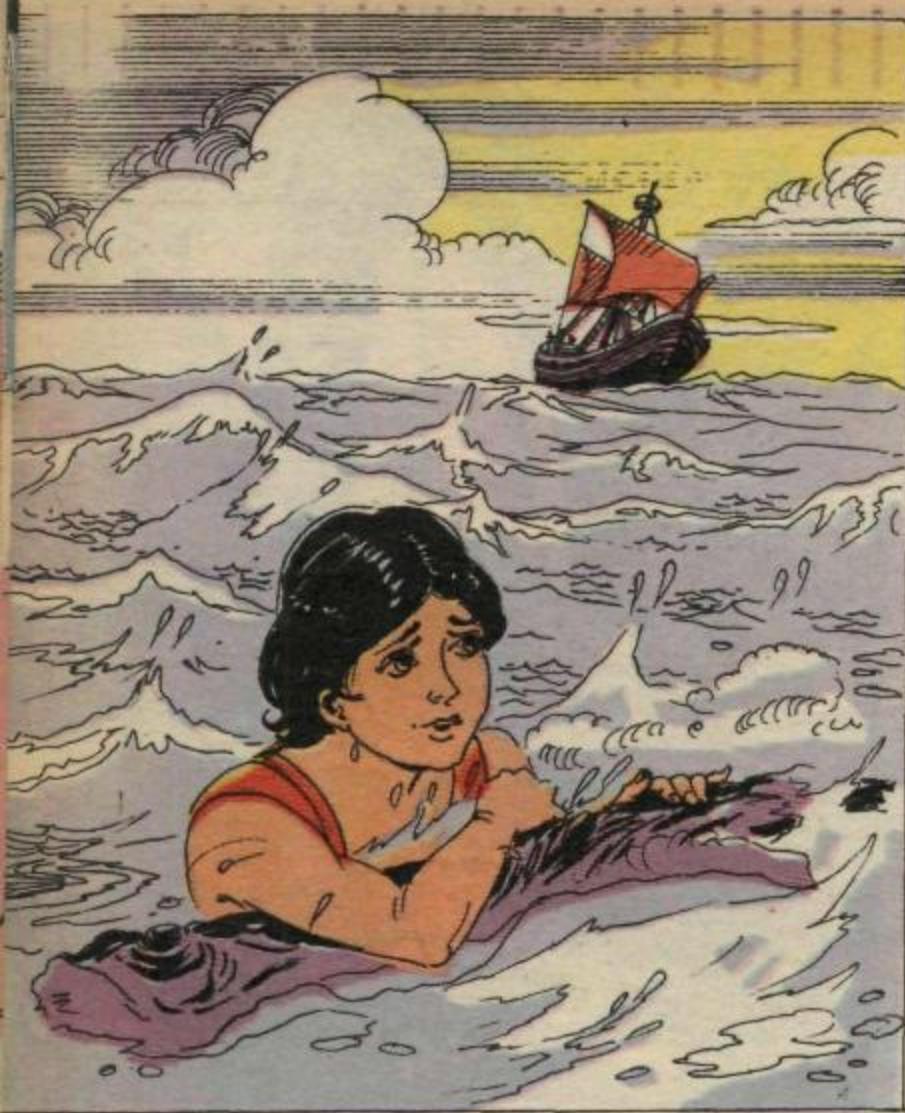
The ship touched a few ports where the merchants did some brisk business. For the first few days, Sindbad merely watched them greeting the traders gathered at the port to buy the merchandise and bargaining with them for a good price. He listened to their demands and requirements, and whenever he knew he had the stuff they were asking for, he would open a bundle, packet, or sack and sell the items without caring for much profit.

One day, they saw an island at a distance. A party of sailors boarded a small boat to go ashore and explore. Sindbad went along with them. They found that the small island was deserted. Strangely, there were no men, and no animals. Not



even a single tree grew on the island. They decided, there was no point in wasting their time on the island, or inviting the others from the ship. As they were about to get into the boat, they had the shock of their lives. The island shook! They ran to their boat and scrambled into it. Poor Sindbad! Before he could jump in, the island violently shook again and he was thrown into the rough sea. To his horror he realised that it was no island but a huge whale. He was, however, relieved to see that it was now far away from him. 'But where's the boat?' he wondered and looked all over the





place. He could only see their ship at a distance. Would the boat with his companions have sunk in the sea? He shouted for help; he waved his arms while trying to keep himself afloat. Neither the captain nor anybody else on board the ship seemed to have seen him or heard him. He knew it would be futile to swim towards the ship, which was not only far away from him but now appeared to be moving away.

Fortunately for him, he saw a drift-wood floating down his way. He immediately caught hold of it. That would save him from drowning till his stamina lasted. He clung on to the

piece of wood and drifted along with it. Suddenly he saw that he was nearing an island. This one had trees on it. He let go the piece of wood and mustered all his strength and swam to the shore where he lay exhausted for some time.

After lying down for a while, Sindbad felt that he had regained some strength and he could go deeper into the island and find out the possibilities of getting some help. He began walking. He came upon some wild trees with fruits. He plucked a few and ate them. Soon he saw a spring from which he drank cool water. That gave him more strength and he began walking faster and faster.

Suddenly, he heard the sound of horse hooves. Someone was approaching. At first he thought he would hide behind a big tree. Suppose the rider went past him without seeing him? He would then be missing a chance of securing some kind of help. So, he stood in the middle of the pathway, in full view of the rider, whoever that be.

The rider reined in the animal, which stopped in front of Sindbad. One thing was certain now: the place had people and horses. He could possibly expect some help.



"Who are you?" the man asked without dismounting.

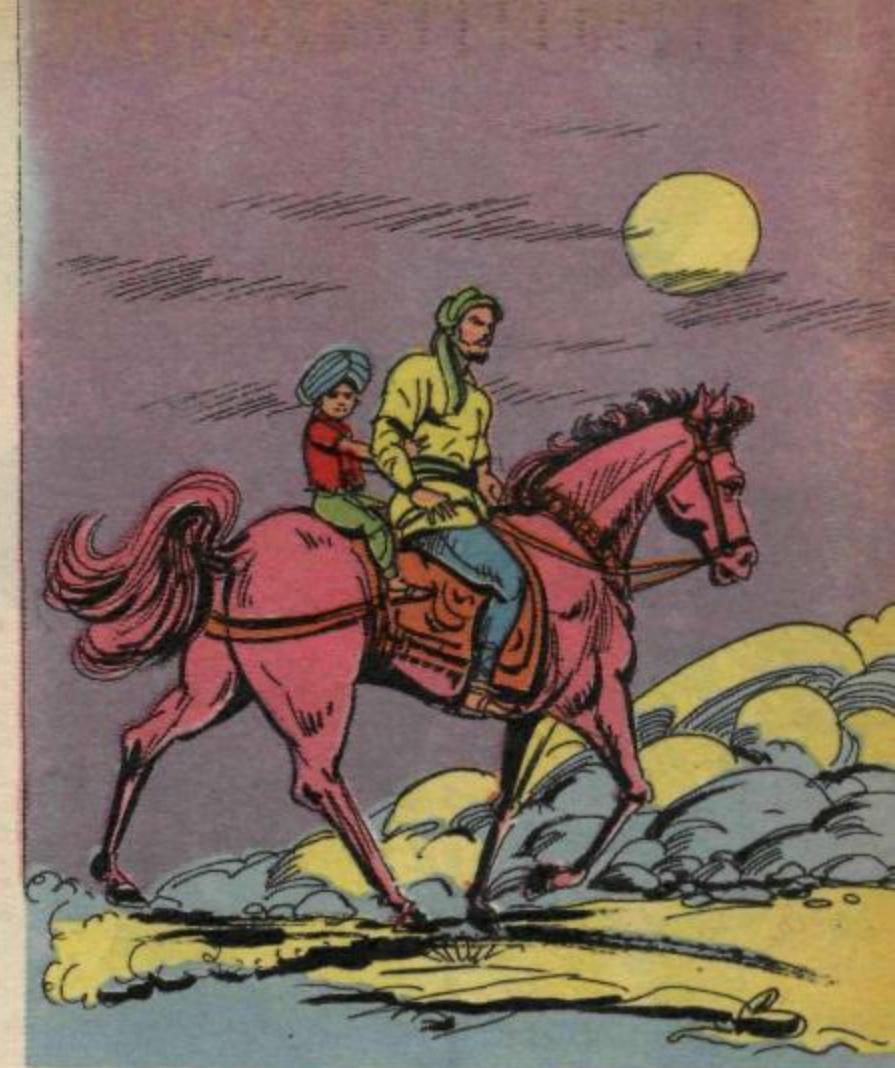
"I'm Sindbad and I'm from Baghdad," the boy replied boldly.

"How did you come here?" the man questioned him with authority. He was now standing by the side of his white horse.

Sindbad then told him how he had sailed from Baghdad and how he escaped from being eaten or swallowed by a whale and how he was cast ashore on the island. "May I know to whom I'm talking?" he asked at the end of his narration.

"I'm in charge of the royal stable. I shall take you along to meet our King Himrage." He asked Sindbad to get on to the horse behind him and they rode out. Soon they reached a cave. The man tied the horse at the entrance, which was being guarded by half-a-dozen soldiers who saluted them as they entered the cave. They walked through a brightly lit cave and reached a huge hall. There was a crowd and they appeared to be eagerly waiting for someone, as they all looked in the same direction.

A herald came and announced the arrival of King Himrage. For some time, people thronged around him, probably presenting petitions. Once those people went away, Sindbad

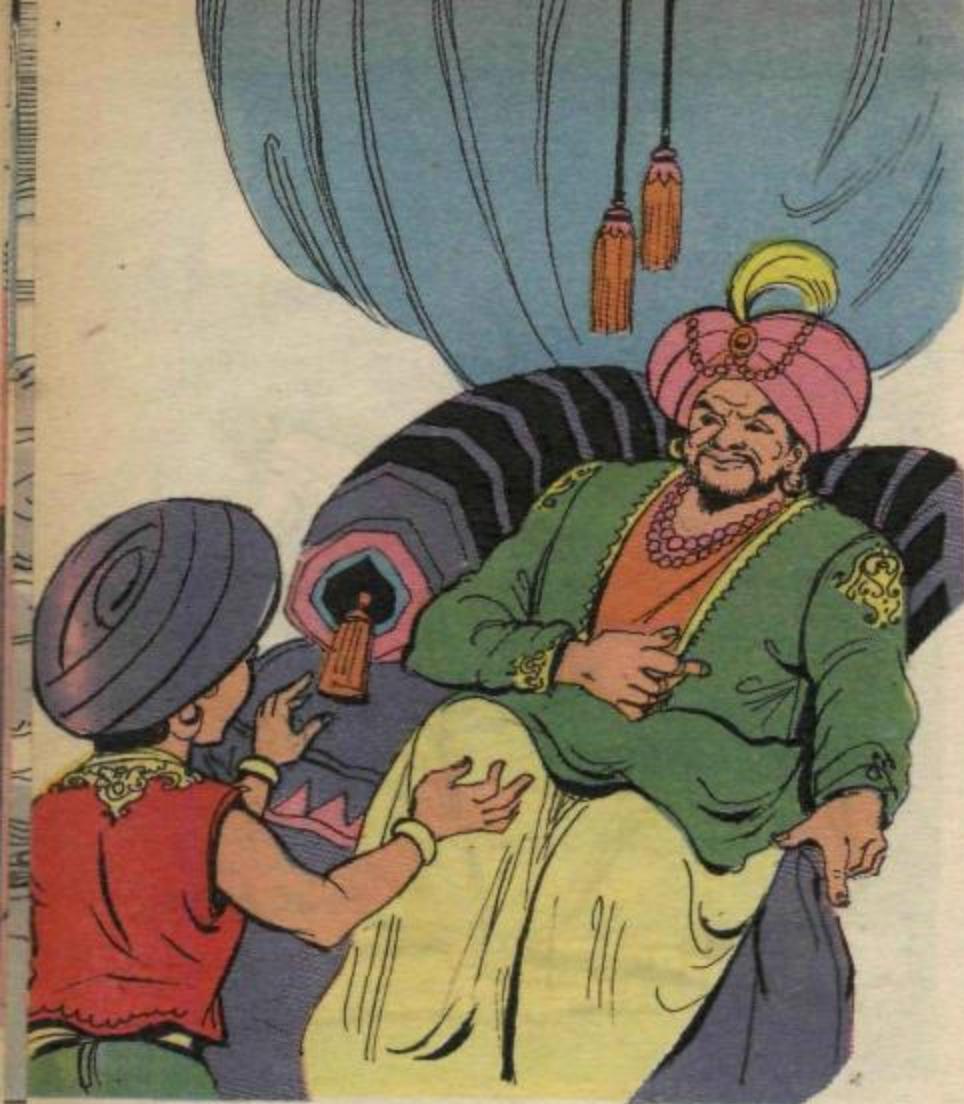


could see him properly. The oldish-looking king was in full regalia. The stable-in-charge went up to him and told him of their unexpected visitor. The king glanced at Sindbad.

When he heard that the boy had been cast ashore after an exciting time in the sea, the king signalled to him to come nearer. Sindbad bowed low and was thrilled when the king extended his hand. Sindbad kissed his palm to denote his obedience to King Himrage. In front of the king, who was he? Not even a full-fledged merchant.

"Sindbad, henceforth you'll be known as the sailor!" said the king.





"There are not many heroes like you in my kingdom. So, I want you to stay here as my guest. Your comforts will be looked after as long as you stay."

The king then asked the stable chief to take care of the boy till his ship called in at their port. "I'm keen to know more about your country, so whenever you get time, do come here and spend some time with me," the king added, while he bid good-bye to Sindbad.

Sindbad stayed in a special room on one side of the palace, near the stable. He was given the best of food, and on alternate days, the

king sent for him and eagerly listened to the boy. Whenever he found time, Sindbad would roam the place, meet the people, and befriend them. He also met some of the merchants there and found out from them what products were in greater demand. The stable-in-charge made it possible for him to learn horse-riding. This facilitated his visits to the seaside which was away from the capital.

One day, he was surprised to find some boxes and bundles lying on the sands. The labels on them were familiar; Sindbad recognised the labels he had put on the packets he had carried on the ship. He concluded that the ship must have touched the port. But how did the captain know that he was living on that island?

He made a thorough search of the place and among the ships anchored there, he found the one on which he had travelled. He engaged a boat to take him to the ship. Wasn't the captain surprised to see him? "Sindbad! You? We all took you for dead! Drowned! What happened?"

Sindbad told him all that had happened to him. He was too happy to see the boy alive. He also agreed to take



him to Baghdad, as the ship was actually on its way back to that place. He explained that one of the merchants had undertaken the responsibility of disposing of what Sindbad had taken with him from Baghdad and pay the money to his mother. Poor woman! She was very much agitated when he and some of the merchants went and told her that her son was missing. She would be overjoyed to see her son safe and sound.

Sindbad took the boxes and bundles to his room where he opened them, and took out some of the valuable items and made a gift of them to King Hirmage. He was extremely pleased with Sindbad. He did not want the boy to go away from his kingdom, but agreed to his departure when he told the king how keen he was to rejoin his mother. Sindbad bade farewell to the king, after prom-

ising him that he would return to the kingdom to carry on trade with the merchants there.

He sold the rest of the items and bought some rarities that he saw in the kingdom. He very much wanted to take a horse along. But the captain said it had to wait till they came on another trip.



"I came home, sold those rare items, and made a lot of money. When I gave it to my mother, she asked me to use it for buying merchandise if I so wished to undertake another voyage. Before many days had passed, I did get ready for another voyage," said Sindbad, concluding his narration. "My friend," he told Hindbad, "you must now go to bed. We'll by and by decide what we should do tomorrow morning."

(NEXT MONTH : THE SECOND VOYAGE)





STORIES FROM MAHABHARATA

Sankaray

The story so far:

The Pandava princes after many hardships caused by the enmity of their cousins, the Kaurava princes, are at last given half the Kuru kingdom. Prince Yudhishtira, the eldest son of the late King Pandu, is crowned king of this new kingdom, and builds a capital named Indraprastha, on the banks of the river Yamuna. Not long afterwards, Prince Arjuna goes on a year's exile, and during his wanderings comes to Dwaraka, the kingdom of Sri Krishna, where he meets Krishna's sister Subhadra, whom he marries.

The following summer, Sri Krishna and Prince Arjuna, with Draupadi and Subhadra, spent many a pleasant week beside the river Yamuna.

One morning, as they were all relaxing on the banks of the river, a strange, bearded figure came towards them from out of the forest.

"Fear not," said Krishna with a

smile. "For, I recognize our visitor. It is Agni, the god of Fire. But he looks as though he is in pain."

The god of Fire, coming closer, folded his hands in greeting. "Hear me, O Princes," he roared. "Brahma, the god of Creation, has advised me to burn down the medicinal forest of Khandava in order to cure my accursed indigestion. But Indra, the



King of Gods, will not permit the burning. So, I crave your protection whilst I carry out the task."

The princes readily assured the god of Fire of their protection. But Arjuna, who realised the difficulties, said: "O god of Fire, as you know, a warrior must never underestimate his opponents, nor can he afford to be unmindful of his own arms and weapons. We badly need a chariot that is light and swift, with horses to match, together with a bow that will never break, and other weapons so that we can meet the strength of the gods who may come to fight with us."

Immediately, the god of Fire invoked the presence of Varuna, the god of the Waters. When Varuna appeared, Agni beseeched him to give the princes the Gandiva, which was the magic bow with a never emptying quiver of arrows. Agni also asked for the war chariot with the image of Lord Hanuman on its pennant, and for the discus.

The god of the Waters brought all the things and then promptly disappeared.

The discus in the hands of Krishna was a deadly weapon. When thrown, it could destroy several opponents and then miraculously return to the



hands of the thrower.

Now well armed, the princes told the god of Fire to start burning down the forest.

Soon the sky dazzled with huge tongues of fire. Tall medicinal trees soon became torches of flame. Nothing could survive such a conflagration.

Now, all the gods in heaven hurried to their king, Lord Indra, and begged that he fought this terrible fire. Indra commanded Parjanya, the god of Rain, to put out the flames. But all his efforts were in vain. The downpour he sent merely turned into vapour in the terrific heat. Lord Indra



became furious and commanded Parjanya to let loose torrential cloudbursts to quench the flames.

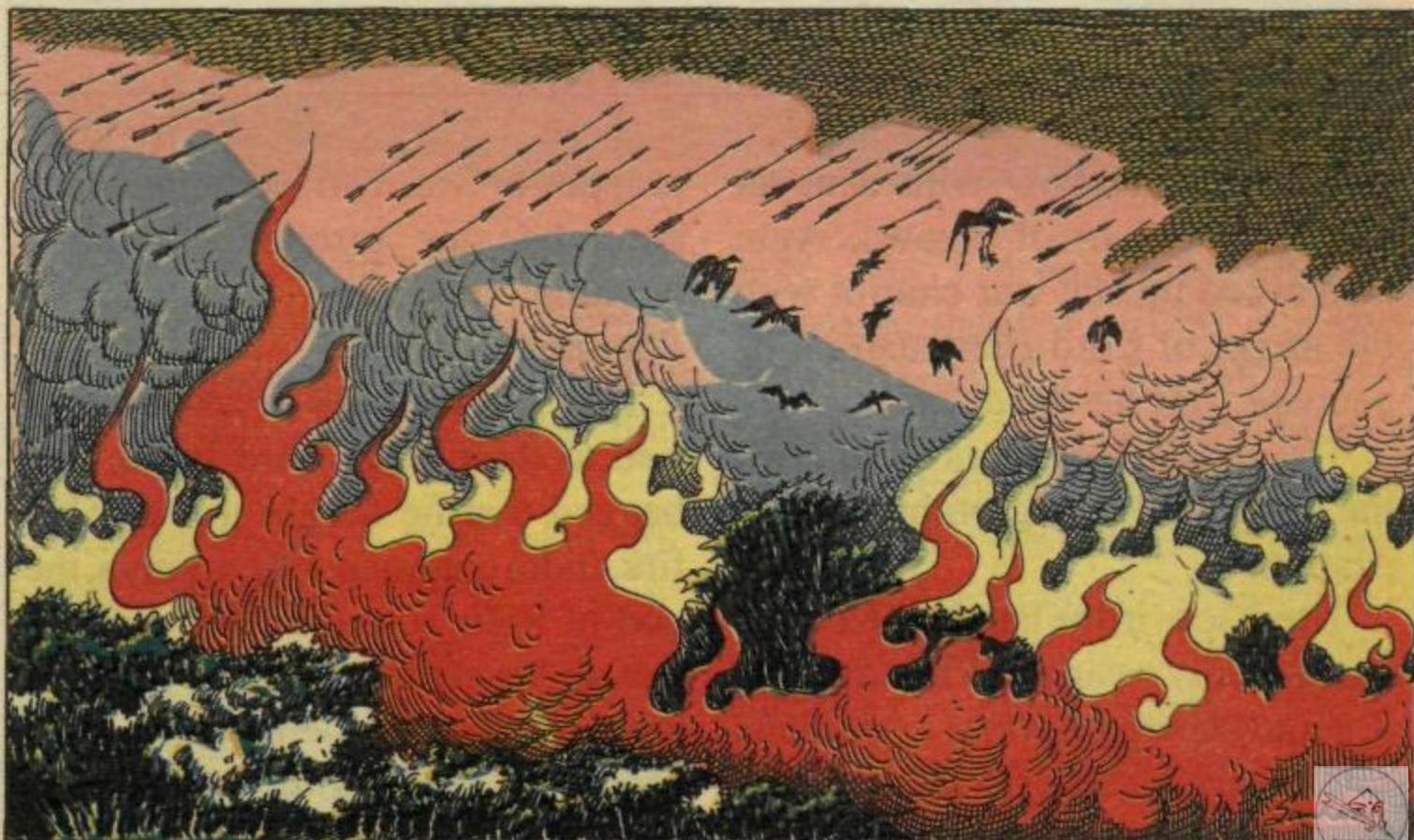
But Arjuna, with the Gandiva bow and the magic quiver, shot hundreds of arrows into the air, which formed a roof over the forest, so that not even one drop of water could penetrate.

When it was obvious that nothing could now prevent the entire Khandava forest from being reduced to ashes, the guardian of the forest, Takshaka, the Serpent Chief, escaped with his life to Kurukshetra. Not so fortunate was his son, Aswasen, who tried to escape with his mother.

Lord Indra sent a shaft of brilliant light directed at Arjuna, but even this had no effect. Then the demon inhabitants of the forest banded together to fight against the princes. But the devastating discus in the hands of Sri Krishna, and Arjuna's magic arrows, very soon destroyed all the demons. The only exception was the demon Maya, who begged the princes for his life, which they granted.

The devastating fire had by now spent all its fury, and the god of Fire regained his former health. Then blessing Sri Krishna and Arjuna, the god vanished.

Lord Indra, who had been forced



to admire the prowess of Krishna and Arjuna, appeared before them in all his shining glory.

"My sons," he commanded, "ask any boon of me and it shall be granted."

Arjuna, whose mind forever dwelt on becoming invincible, humbly asked to be given magical weapons.

"Most valiant son," Indra said, "someone greater than myself, Lord Siva, will descend from Kailas to give you a terrible weapon. But, meanwhile let me bestow on you both a gift of greater value. As you are bosom friends, from henceforth you will be invulnerable to attacks by mankind as well as by gods."

When Lord Indra departed, the princes, followed by Maya the demon, made their way back to the river Yamuna.

Trotting alongside Arjuna, Maya the demon was full of praise for the princes. "Noble prince," he exclaimed, clutching Arjuna's arm, "I owe my life to you, and wish to give a gift in return. As I am the architect of all demons, I shall build for you a wonderful palace, the like of which the world has never seen."

Arjuna shrugged him off. "Listen, my friend," he said. "We princes



of the Pandu dynasty never accept gifts for the protection we give to the weak and the needy."

But Maya would not accept 'no' for an answer, and in the end, Arjuna consulted Krishna on Maya's offer.

Krishna smiled as he listened to the arguments raised by Arjuna and Maya. "You should accept Maya's offer," he told Arjuna. "As you know, your worthy brother Yudhishtira is desirous of building a magnificent palace at Indraprastha. So, why not build it for him?"

In the end, Arjuna agreed and, with Draupadi and Subhadra, he



journeyed back to Indraprastha, where they recounted to Yudhishtira all that had taken place on the river Yamuna, and Maya's offer to build a palace.

On an auspicious day, Maya presented the princes with a plan for the palace. Everyone, including Krishna, was amazed at the breathtaking beauty of the building that Maya had envisaged.

Maya gathered a lot of his building materials from the banks of lake Bindu, where he had previously planned to build a palace for the demon king, Vrishaparava. At this old site was hidden countless ornamental slabs of sheer white marble, encrusted with precious stones. Also carefully hidden was the mace belonging to the demon king, and the famous conch originally possessed by Varuna, the god of the Waters. Maya gave the mace to Bhima, and

the conch to Arjuna.

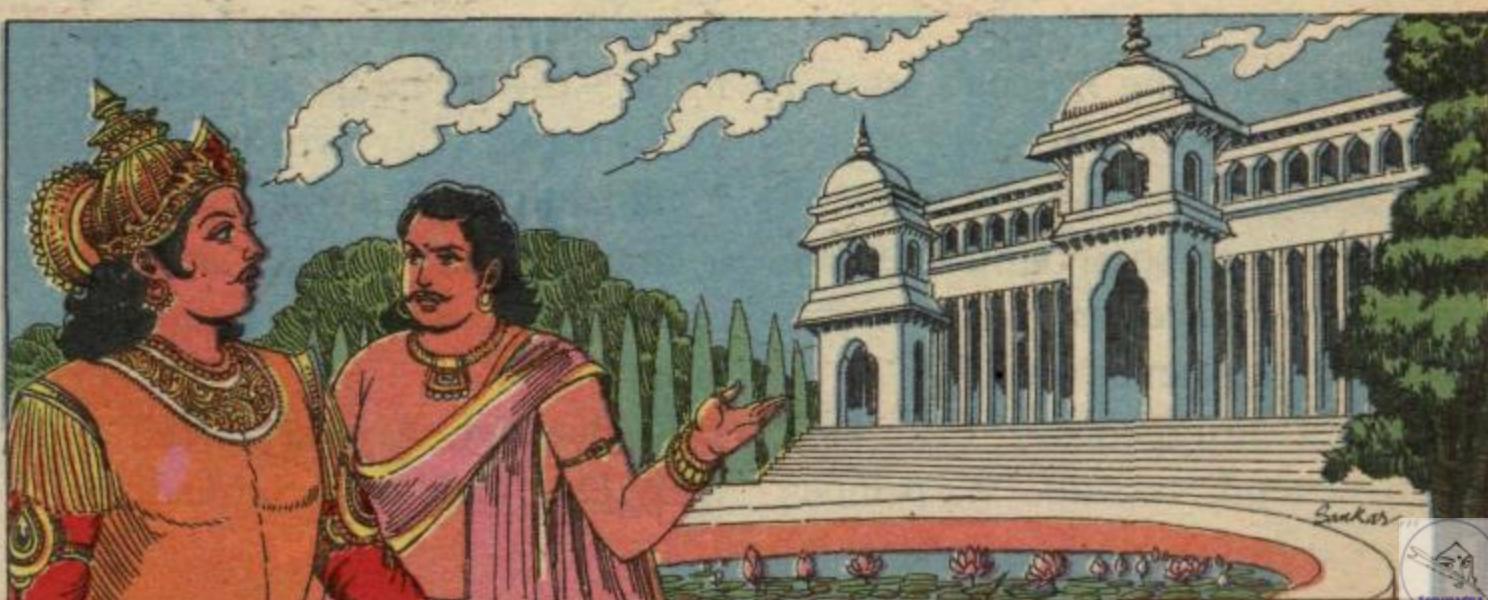
Thousands of workmen toiled day and night to build the palace. And as months rolled by, the beauty of the palace was slowly unveiled, making everyone gasp with astonishment at its grandeur.

When, at last, the palace was completed, it became a place of attraction and of wonder for all.

Inside the palace, many of the ornate pillars and decorations were inlaid with precious stones. In the palace grounds, ornamental lakes had been dug, edged with pure crystal and the waters contained golden lotus flowers and golden fish.

When the Pandava princes took up residence in their new palace, a great banquet was held, to which all the kings of the land were invited, as well as the learned sages.

— *To continue*



FORTS OF INDIA -- 7

Strongholds of the Deccan

Script : Meera Ugra ♦ Artwork : Aritra

The fort at Devagiri was regarded the gateway to South India because of its strategic position, perched as it was on a solid granite rock in the middle of a plateau.

There was a wall all around the city and between the city and the base of the rock on which the fort stood there were several defence walls and three moats. The water level in the innermost moat could be controlled and during an attack the water level would be raised to submerge the causeway across it. If the enemy crossed the bridge he gained access to a tunnel.

The tunnel was the only route to the citadel. It was dark and full of danger. Soldiers would hide in

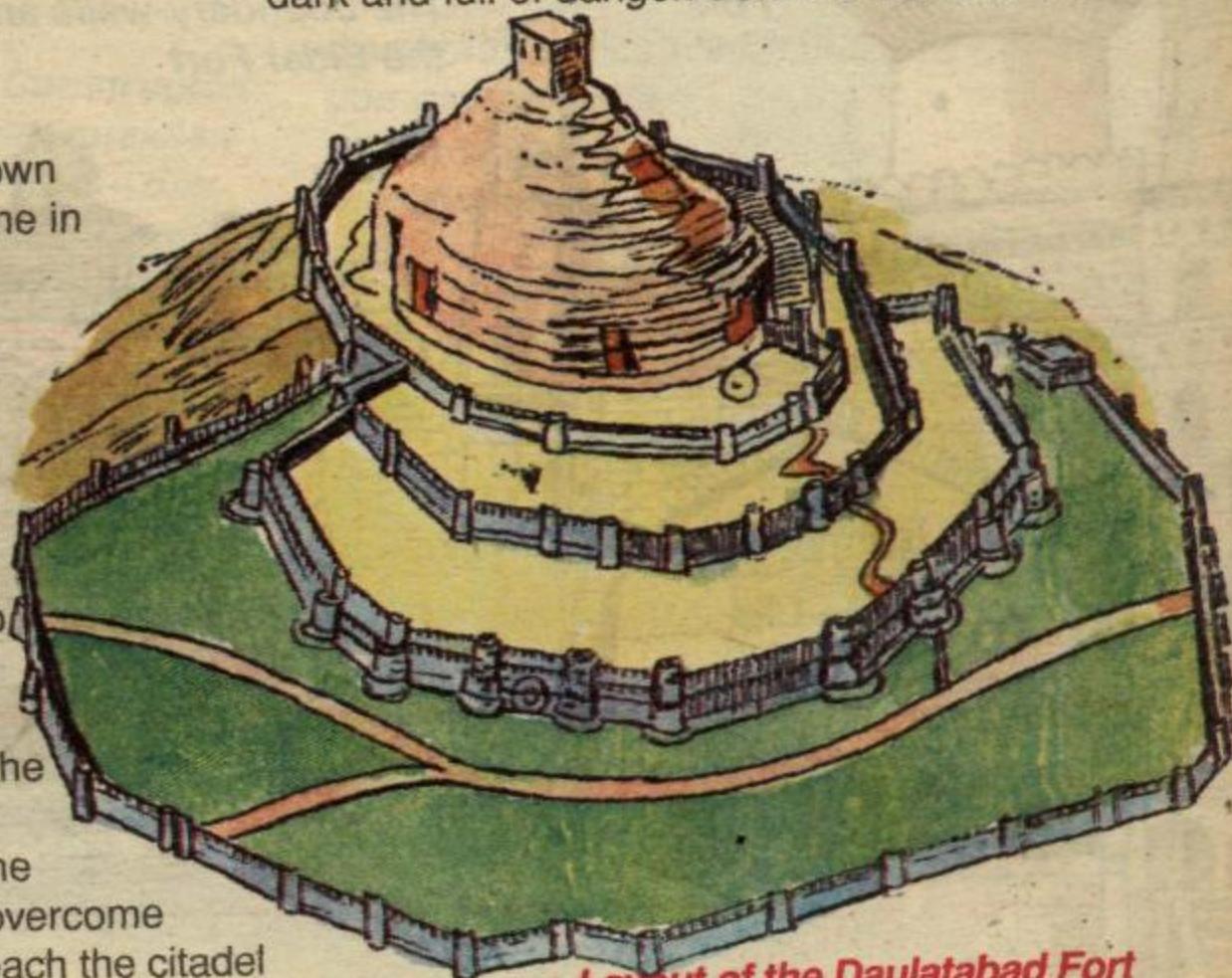


An old watchtower of the Devagiri Fort

niche in the rock to cut down intruders. If the enemy came in large numbers the tunnel could be filled with smoke and turned into a gas chamber.

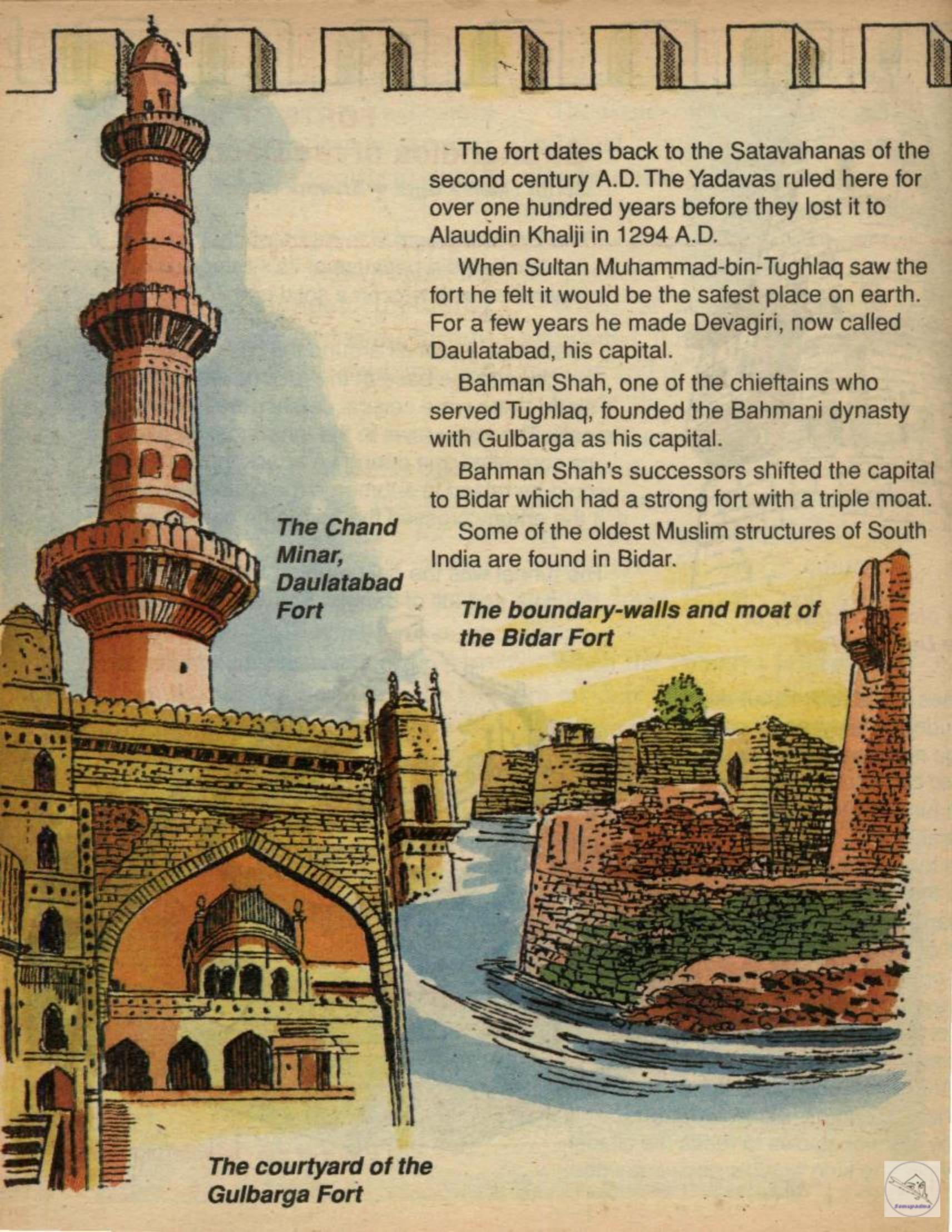
The tunnel branched out into three passages towards the end. Only one of the passages led to the outside; the other two led to traps which could inflict a horrible death on the unwary.

After emerging out of the tunnel the enemy had to overcome many more obstacles to reach the citadel in which the king and his nobles resided.



Layout of the Daulatabad Fort





The fort dates back to the Satavahanas of the second century A.D. The Yadavas ruled here for over one hundred years before they lost it to Alauddin Khalji in 1294 A.D.

When Sultan Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq saw the fort he felt it would be the safest place on earth. For a few years he made Devagiri, now called Daulatabad, his capital.

Bahman Shah, one of the chieftains who served Tughlaq, founded the Bahmani dynasty with Gulbarga as his capital.

Bahman Shah's successors shifted the capital to Bidar which had a strong fort with a triple moat.

Some of the oldest Muslim structures of South India are found in Bidar.

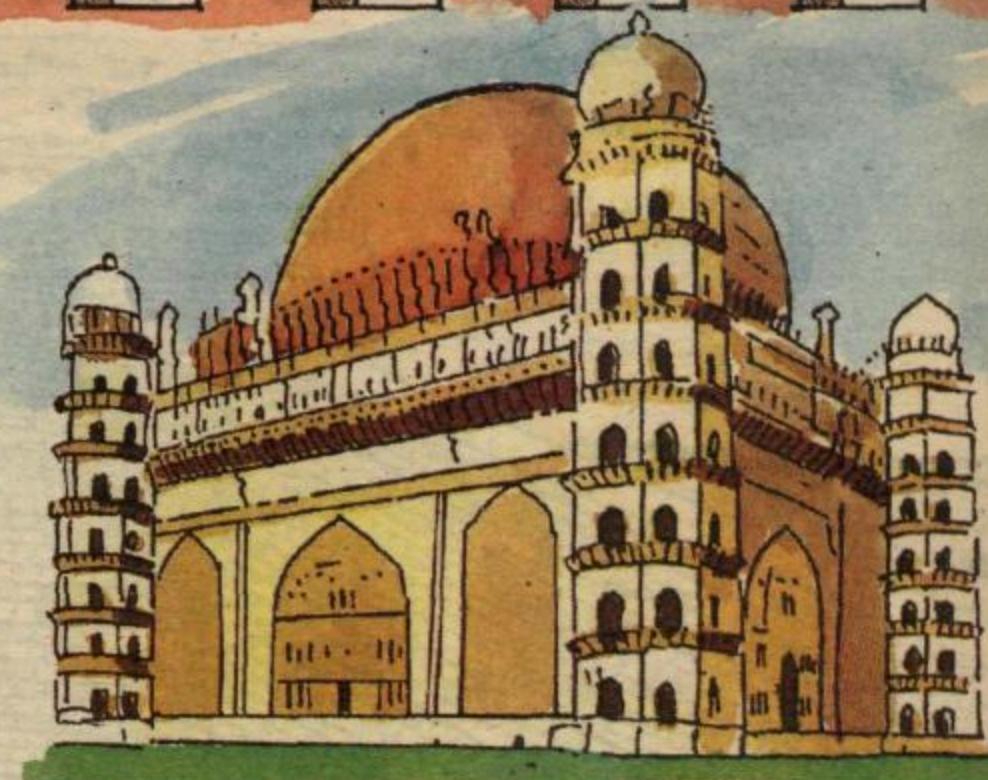
The boundary-walls and moat of the Bidar Fort

The courtyard of the Gulbarga Fort

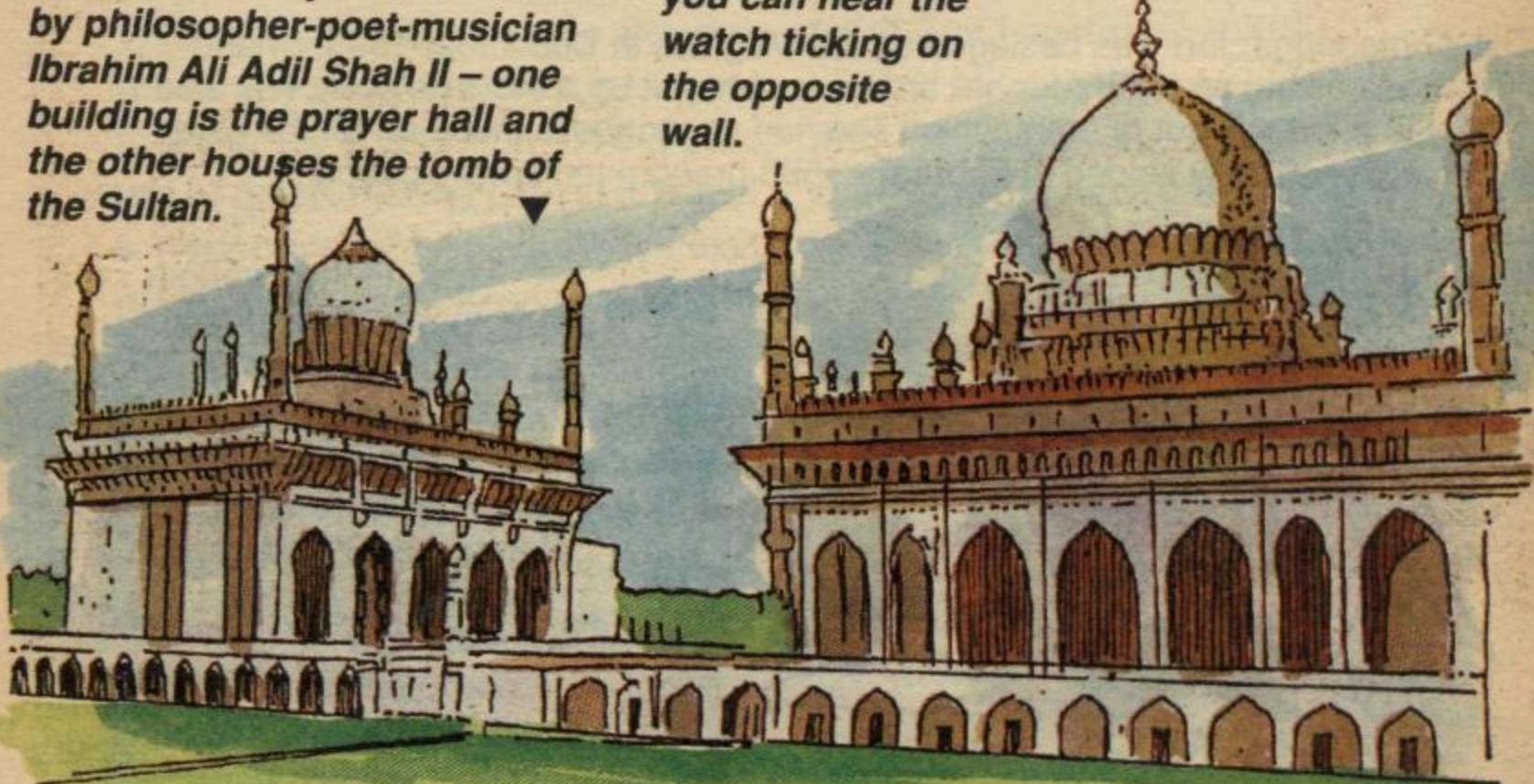
The Bahmani empire began to crumble towards the end of the 15th century. In 1490, Yusuf Adil Khan of Bijapur broke away to establish the Adilshahi dynasty. The tomb of Muhammad Adil Shah, the most illustrious king of this dynasty, is known as the Gol Gumbaz. Its dome is the second largest in the world.

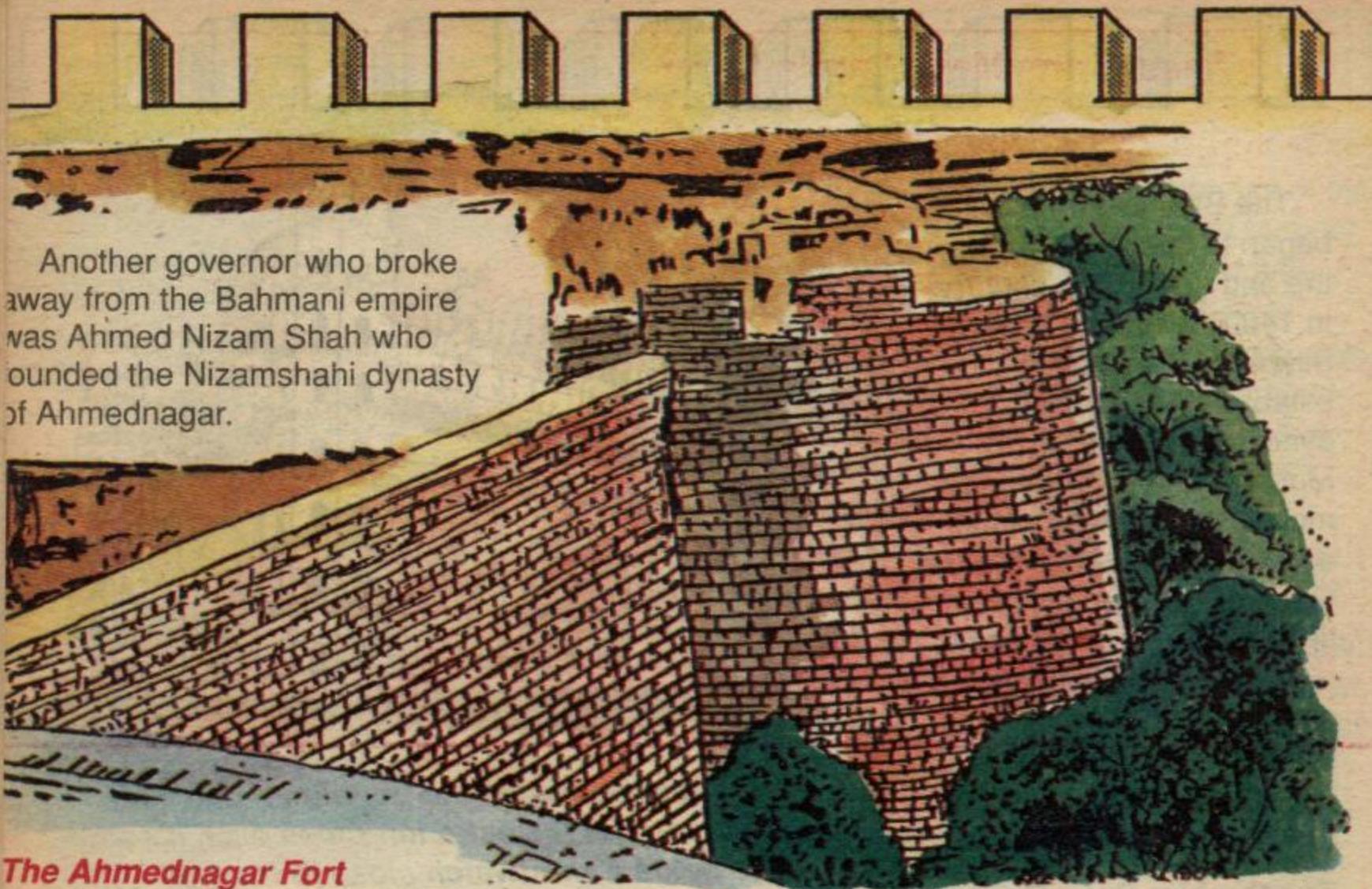
Adil Shah built an efficient water system to carry water through underground pipes and aqueducts from distant springs and rivers.

The Ibrahim Roja. Constructed by philosopher-poet-musician Ibrahim Ali Adil Shah II – one building is the prayer hall and the other houses the tomb of the Sultan.



▲ ***Gol Gumbaz.*** Inside the building if you clap once you get the echo ten times over. If someone holds a wristwatch close to the wall you can hear the watch ticking on the opposite wall.





Another governor who broke away from the Bahmani empire was Ahmed Nizam Shah who founded the Nizamshahi dynasty of Ahmednagar.

The Ahmednagar Fort

The Ahmednagar fort was besieged by the Mughals in December 1595. Chand Bibi who was acting as regent for her brother's son, put up a stout defence. It is said that when the fort ran out of ammunition she had cannonballs made out of the gold in the treasury. A treaty signed in February 1596 brought temporary peace.

Chand Bibi



During the freedom struggle, the Ahmednagar Fort was used as a prison.

Many famous political prisoners, including Sardar Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru, Abul Kalam Azad and Acharya Kripalani were imprisoned there at various times. Pandit Nehru wrote his book, 'The Discovery of India', while serving a term at the fort.



Freaks of Fortune



Long long ago, there lived a very wealthy merchant. He was not only rich but very proud of his riches! Whenever he saw people praying for wealth and prosperity, he would mock at them and say, "What's the use of remembering God? He's deaf to your prayers! Look, how I'm well off all by myself! No one has helped me!"

One day, he really wanted to ascertain whether people who usually prayed for wealth would still continue to have faith in God once their desire had been fulfilled. So, he made a unique plan. He came out into the street and announced with the beating of a drum hanging from his neck,

"He who will proclaim in public and in broad daylight that he no longer has faith in God will receive as reward five bagsful of gold!"

But alas! All those who heard him, including the poor and the needy, replied angrily, "Fie, you wealthy wicked fellow! How dare you purchase our faith in the Almighty with meagre coins of gold? We'll continue to depend on God's bounty till the last breath of our life."

"Oh! How foolish you all are!" laughed the rich man.

At last, he came across a thin mendicant in tattered clothes chanting the name of God. "You unfortu-



nate soul! Stop relying on God and take these bags of gold and revive your starving self!"

The beggar extended his hands for the bags. He spoke not a single word, for he hardly had any strength to do so.

"Have patience, dear fellow," put in the rich man with a mocking smile. "You'll receive the reward not before you declare that you no longer believe in the existence of God!"

"That's not possible for me," protested the mendicant falteringly. "I'll never cease to depend on God's mercy even if I die of starvation!"

"Do what I say, and your fortune

will change instantly!" said the rich man.

"I've no interest in that kind of change. But know this, my fortune can change if God wills – and that alone will be true change."

"Alas! Isn't there a single soul in the town who does not have faith in God? I don't believe in God's existence, yet I'm wealthy and I'm not short of anything, whereas these unfortunate people don't even have a roof over their head nor enough to eat and yet go on chanting God's name!" muttered the rich man and returned home with bouncing steps.

But, in the course of the passing years, things began to change. One of the major changes that Time brought about was that the merchant gradually lost all his wealth and finally became a pauper. He left the town and set out to seek a better fortune elsewhere.

Soon he reached a beautiful city. Tired after his long journey, his stomach gnawing with hunger and his throat parched with thirst, he collapsed under a tree. It was not before long that the king of the realm was on his way to the forest for hunting. Suddenly, he saw the starving man with tattered clothes, lying unconscious under the tree.

He stopped, dismounted, and stared at him.

"Minister! Take this man into the palace as my guest, feed him well, clothe him, and bring him to me when he has rested enough and regained his health," he ordered.

After some days, the stranger was brought to the presence of the king. He recounted his sorrowful tale.

"Now, dear friend," said the king soothingly. "Wipe off your tears. But do you recognise me?"

The merchant intently peered at the round little man with a thick moustache sitting on the throne. But he did not appear to be familiar.

"I'm none other than the half-naked, starving mendicant whom you had met years ago. You offered me bagsful of gold on condition that I stopped having faith in God's mercy," said the king.

The traveller stood awe-struck and his mouth fell open. Indeed, he

was the man he had met, for the small scar was still visible on his forehead.

"But your Majesty, how... come... you're wearing a crown now?" stammered the merchant nervously.

"It so happened that the king of this land, on his death-bed, had told his ministers that the throne would remain vacant as long as they had not found a man who was totally without greed. They were travelling in disguise and they overheard our dialogue. After you left me, they led me straight to the palace!"

His guest stood speechless. The king paused and said again, "It's all due to God's will that in a twinkle of an eye, my fortune changed and I ascended the throne."

The poor merchant bowed and said, "Indeed, Your Highness, how right were you then! How my wealth and pride had blinded me!"

— Retold by Anup Kishore Das



SPORTS

YESTERDAY
TODAY
TOMORROW

A BULL-ISH ACT

This happened at Lord's more than a hundred years ago – on June 10, 1864. MCC were playing against Oxford University. H.E. Bull, of MCC, was batting. A ball came and he hit it twice. Howzat? you may ask. Well, you'll have to figure it out yourself. Anyway, he was sent off the field – a first-time event in cricket history.

A CROP OF WORLD RECORDS

The first one week of June saw three new world records being created. On June 5, Haile Gebresilasie, of Ethiopia, clocked 26 min. 43.53 seconds in 10,000 metres at Hengelo, in Netherlands. This was an improvement on 26:52.53 set by William Sigei, of Kenya, in Oslo in July last year. Haile covered half the distance in half the time he clocked – which shows at what steady pace he ran from start to finish.

The same day, in Moscow, Russia's Olga Kuzenkova threw the hammer with a heave of 68.14 metres, bettering the record (66.85m) of Mihaela Melinte, of Romania, made at Bucharest last March. Till then, the world record of 66.82 metres had remained with Olga. She had created that record at Adler, Russia, in February 1994.

On June 8, Moses Kiptanui, of Kenya, broke the world record in men's 5,000 metres, running it in 12:55.30 minutes

at Rome.. He slashed one-and-a-half seconds from the previous record – 12:56.96 – set by Haile Gebresilasie (Ethiopia) in June last year. Finishing second at Rome was Daniel Komen, also of Kenya, who clocked 12:56.12 which, for Juniors, is a world mark (earlier record: 13:02.75 by Kirui Ismael, of Kenya).



RUNNING FOR LIFE

When Teerthakumar of Calcutta was just 8, he took a fancy for long distance running. And he practised very regularly, thus losing much of the energy his system needed. It has now come to such a pass for the 28-year-old Sports Assistant in a well-known firm, that he has to run 25 to 30 km every day for the next 15 years if he does not want to be afflicted by paralysis. He is determined to convert this "cure" into a world record. The Commonwealth champion, Dr. Ron Hill, ran a total of 206,039 km between September 3, 1956 and May 19, 1994. Teerthakumar aims at "running" Ron in half his time – 15 years. He did attempt a record in 1990, when he ran non-stop for six days together at the Gateshead Stadium in London, but he was short by 51 km. The year 2010 (or sometime earlier) will tell us whether Teerthakumar will have a world record in his name.





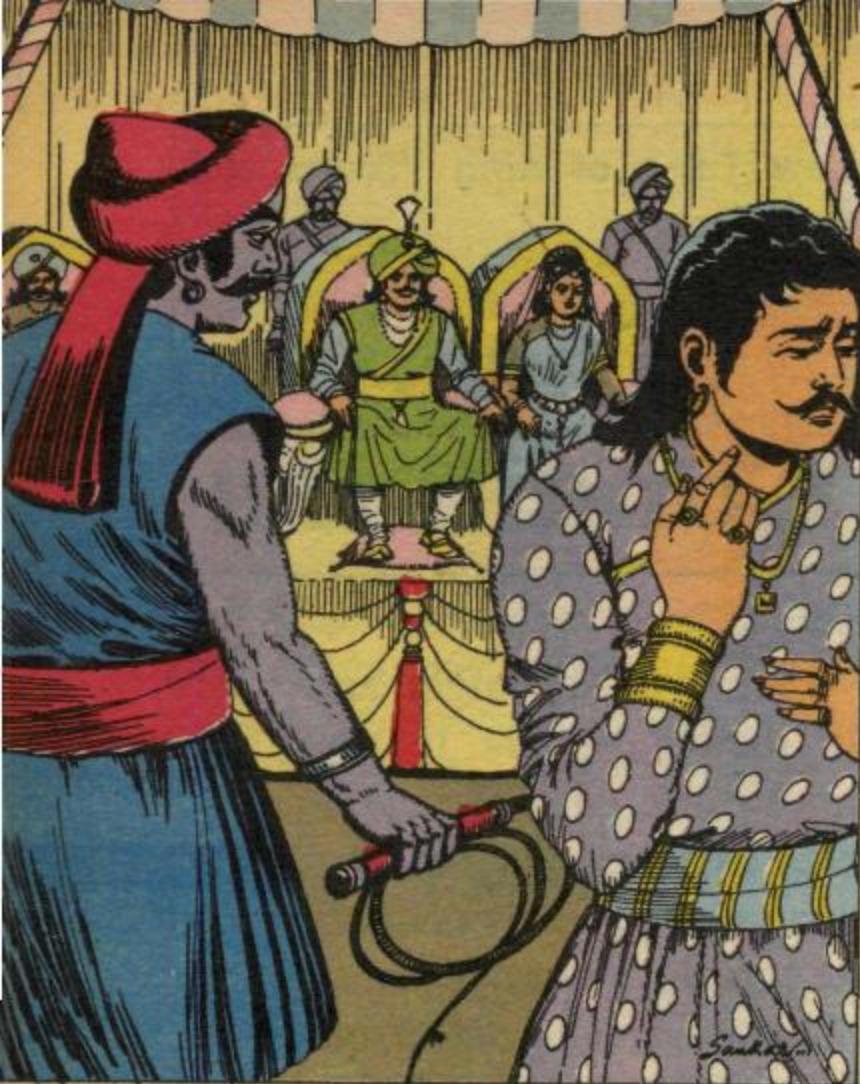
New Tales of King Vikram and the Vampire

Three Conditions

Dark was the night and weird the atmosphere. It rained from time to time; gusts of wind shook the trees. Between thunderclaps and the moaning of jackals could be heard the eerie laughter of spirits. Flashes of lightning revealed fearsome faces.

But King Vikramaditya did not swerve a bit. He climbed the ancient tree once again and brought down the corpse. However, as soon as he began crossing the desolate cremation ground, with the corpse lying on his shoulder, the vampire that possessed the corpse spoke: "O King! You seem to be making untiring efforts and without respite, as if you wish to achieve something. I pity you. Instead of enjoying comfortable sleep on a cozy bed, you're still coming after me. I've a doubt whether you're overlooking your own capabilities. It may all end up as a futile exercise. Someone may become fortunate, but he may not





know how to convert it to his advantage. His qualification, experience, and capabilities may be overlooked by others. We've the best example of this in Suryaprabha. Listen to her story." The vampire then began his narration.

Suryaprabha was the only daughter of King Prabhakara of Veerdurg. The princess was not only very beautiful but was clever in chess. There was no one in the kingdom who could beat her in the game – except, probably, the king himself. It was he who taught the princess how to play chess.

The princess grew into woman-

hood. Prabhakara was aware that the time had come to find a husband for her. He decided to ascertain her wish in the matter. "Darling! It's time you got married. I must find a bridegroom for you. Do you have any views in the matter?"

"Father, I've decided it this way," Suryaprabha told him. "Whoever beats me in chess will be a good suitor for me. But if he were to get defeated, he must suffer a hundred lashes. And if he fails a second time, then he must take a vow that he'll never marry. If he were to challenge me a third time and gets defeated, you'll have to sentence him to death!"

King Prabhakara was stunned when he heard these conditions set by the princess. But he realised that, as her father, he had the responsibility to see to her wish. So, he arranged for suitable announcements to be made in Veerdurg as well as in all the neighbouring kingdoms.

Most of the princes had heard about Suryaprabha's beauty, and each one wished to make her his bride. So, they took up the challenge and reached Veerdurg to play chess with her. Quite a few of them returned, ashamed after they were subjected to lashes from a whip.



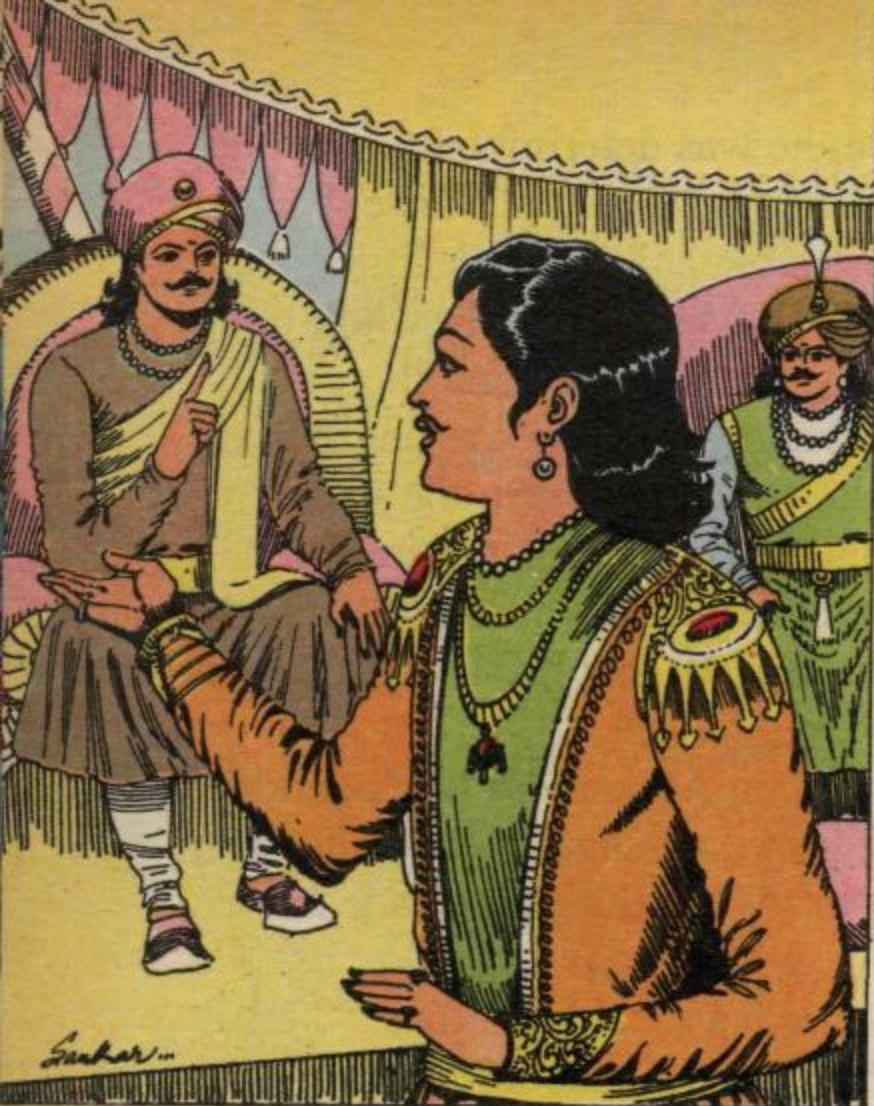
They did not dare play a second game with her. The king was worried. If this went on, who would be left to marry the princess?

King Amarendra of Amarapuri had ascended the throne when he was quite young. As he spent all his time to set things right in his kingdom, he had no opportunity to contemplate marriage and had, therefore, remained a bachelor. Now, he too had heard all about Princess Suryaprabha's beauty and the conditions she had imposed before she chose a husband for herself. The only way he could win her hand was to defeat her in chess. Unfortunately, he did not know how to play chess!

But he was determined to meet her challenge. So, he called in experts in the game and began learning from them. He went about the whole thing very methodically and thoroughly. Devnarayana, who was one of those who coached him in the game, remained with Amarendra for six months, during which time he taught the king all that he should know in chess.

When Amarendra was confident of his knowledge of chess, he went over to Veerdurg and made known his willingness to take up the princess's challenge. King Prabhakara made all arrangements for the contest between Suryaprabha





and Amarendra. As a game was being played after several days, there was a crowd to watch the two match their wits against each other. They watched the play with bated breath. Both made very clever moves. But the princess proved to be a more cautious player and she had no difficulty in trouncing Amarendra in the first game. Cheers went up from the audience.

Amarendra got up and said he was ready to receive the lashes. Suryaprabha felt sorry for him. If he were to take the punishment he too, like the other princes, might go away. But the King of

Amarapuri was not one to give up so easily. He said he would play a second game with the princess. Suryaprabha was surprised. "I hope you're aware of the second condition," King Prabhakara reminded Amarendra. "Do you still want to try your luck?"

"I know all that very well," replied Amarendra. "I shall not marry anybody other than your daughter, O King!"

The second game started. This time Amarendra played very carefully. The princess maintained her lead for a long time. Amarendra concentrated on each of his moves. Suryaprabha found it difficult to check his progress. For one moment, he took his eyes off the board thinking he had succeeded in making a checkmate. It was not. Suryaprabha freed herself by a cleverer move and declared that the game was hers. Amarendra then promised that he would never marry in life.

Suryaprabha now expected Amarendra to return to his kingdom. But, she like everybody else including Prabhakara, was surprised when Amarendra declared that he would play one more game with her. King Prabhakara took pity on him



"That would be foolish, young man," he said. "You'll only loose your head."

"I'm grateful to you for warning me," Amarendra responded. "After all, success and failure are guided by one's fate. Let me try my luck once again."

Suryaprabha was in a dilemma. She went up to her father and said, "Father, I shall not play another game. I'm conceding defeat." She stood by the king coyly.

Everybody was surprised. "My darling daughter," said King Prabhakara, "you've taken the right decision at the right time." He complimented the princess.

The vampire concluded his narration there and turned to King Vikramaditya. "O King! Didn't King Amarendra realise even from the first game that Princess Suryaprabha was a better player? Then why did he agree to play a second time? He got defeated in that game also. Even then he came forward to play a third time knowing fully well that he would lose his life if he was defeated a third time also. Suryaprabha felt sorry for him. That's why she decided to concede defeat so that she could marry him, didn't she? Did she do the correct thing, as her father complimented her? If you know the answers to these questions and yet





decide to remain silent, you know what'll happen. Your head will be blown to pieces!" The vampire cautioned him.

Vikram did not take much time to give his reply. "Amarendra knew that he would never be able to defeat Suryaprabha in chess. Still, he was ready to play even a third time because of his extreme love for the princess. More than his life, marrying Suryaprabha was dear to him. He wished to prove that. And Suryaprabha got the opportunity to choose a suitable husband for herself in Amarendra. She had set three conditions only to find out who

among her suitors would profess real love for her. But many of the princes cared for their lives more and so went back without taking up further challenge. Amarendra, on the other hand, was willing to sacrifice his own life for the sake of making Suryaprabha his wife. King Prabhakara realised what was in her mind and complimented her for her wise decision."

The vampire knew that Vikramaditya had outwitted him once again. He flew back to the ancient tree carrying the corpse with him. And the king drew his sword and went after the vampire.

We increase our wealth when we lessen our desires

Defile not your mouth with impure words

Procrastination is the thief of time

Pride of India

Seen mostly in swamps or on the banks of rivers is the tree which gives us the 'Queen's Flower'. The botanical name *Lagerstroemia flos-reginae* was given to it after the Swedish botanist Magnus V. Lagerstrom. He described it as *flos-reginae*, meaning 'Flower of the Queen'. The flowers are very attractive. At first they are mauve purple or pinkish in colour, but turn white before they fall. They are seen in a bunch, sometimes even two feet in height. The petals appear crumpled and wrinkled. Therefore, people also call them 'crepe flowers'. The two flowering seasons are April-May and July-August.

The leaves are a bright green on top, and a pale green below. The undersurface is full of thick veins. The leaves grow alternately on the branches. Fresh leaves appear during April-May. The fruits are initially green in colour; they turn black and can be seen on the tree for a long time, sometimes surviving till the next flowering season.

The timber is considered next only to teak and is used for building boats, bullock or horse-carts, and even for harbour piles and posts, as it can withstand water, probably earning the epithet 'Pride of India'. The local names are *zarul* (Hindi), *ajar* (Bengali), *taman* (Marathi), *patoli* (Oriya), *varagogu* (Telugu), *Kadali* (Tamil), *atampu* (Malayalam), and *Challa* (Kannada).



MARKANDEYA



A great sage named Mrikanda, who lived in the Himalayas, was unhappy because he had no son. He prayed to Lord Siva for the boon of a son. The Lord asked him in his meditation whether he would like to have a wise son who would live only for sixteen years or would like to have a foolish one who would live very long.

Since Mrikanda respected learning and wisdom, he went for the first option.

So, he was blessed with a son who

was named Markandeya. The child had hardly attained his tenth year when scholars and seekers began flocking to him in order to be taught by him. By twelve, he was renowned as a sage and a teacher.

But as the boy grew in age, his parents became sadder and sadder. But they did not disclose the cause of their sadness to their son. However, when Markandeya entered his sixteenth year, they could not control their tears. The young Markandeya was very curious. His parents then had to tell him that his days were numbered. However, if his parents were to sacrifice their remaining years, he would live long!

Markandeya soothed their anguish with many comforting words and then retired to a lonely place and sat in meditation, invoking the grace of Lord Siva. When the time for his death came, the servants of Yama, the god of Death, tried to approach him, but



they were blinded by his aura. It was so bright and dazzling! Then came Yama himself who threw a noose to capture the boy, but the noose was seen tied to the symbol of Siva which the boy had clutched. At once Siva sprang up from the symbol, and the god of Death was vanquished. Because of this incident, Siva came to be known as Mrityunjaya or the Victor over Death.

Of course, Siva was soon appeased and the god of Death came to life again. But the moment for Markandeya to die had passed. Now, with the blessings of the Lord, he had

a new destiny. It was so ordained that he would never cross the age of sixteen. He would for ever remain young.

The legend has great significance. Markandeya did not die at the appointed time because he had lost his own individual identity and had become one with Siva – who is eternal and deathless. Markandeya was not to age beyond sixteen because in his consciousness he had become timeless. There were no times past, present, and future for him – but only eternity. That is a very great spiritual state to be achieved.



DO YOU KNOW?

1. Name the location of the deer park where the Buddha first preached his religion more than 2,500 years ago?
2. Which was the country annexed by Hitler in 1938 and freed in 1945?
3. Which is the largest among living reptiles?
4. Who was the first Indian cricketer to receive the Arjuna Award?
5. What was the former name of Ghana?
6. What is commonly known as Black coal?
7. Who founded the city of Calcutta?
8. What is the average life expectancy of an elephant?
9. Which language is spoken by a majority of the people of Egypt?
10. What is the present name of Abyssinia?
11. An English poet is called "poet's poet". Name him.
12. What is the name of the Italian currency?
13. In Indian mythology, who rode on the elephant called 'Airavat'?
14. Who was the first to walk in outer space?
15. Which is the tallest land animal?
16. What is the name of the holy book of the Parsis?
17. To see the Angel Falls (waterfalls), which country will you visit?
18. Who defeated Napoleon in the Battle of Waterloo?
19. Who was the first President of Pakistan?
20. Which is the longest river of Canada?

ANSWERS

1. Edmund Spenser who lived from 1552 to 1599.
2. Lira
3. Both alligator and crocodile.
4. Salim Durraani, in 1961.
5. Gold Coast
6. Mineral coal
7. Job Charnock
8. Between 70 and 80 years
9. Arabic
10. Ethiopia
11. Sarnath, near Varanasi (Benares)
12. Lord Indra
13. Cosmonaut Alexei Leonov - 1965
14. The giraffe. It is more than 5.5 metres tall.
15. General Avesta
16. Venezuela
17. Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington.
18. Mohammed Ali Jinnah
19. Mackenzie
20. MacKenzie



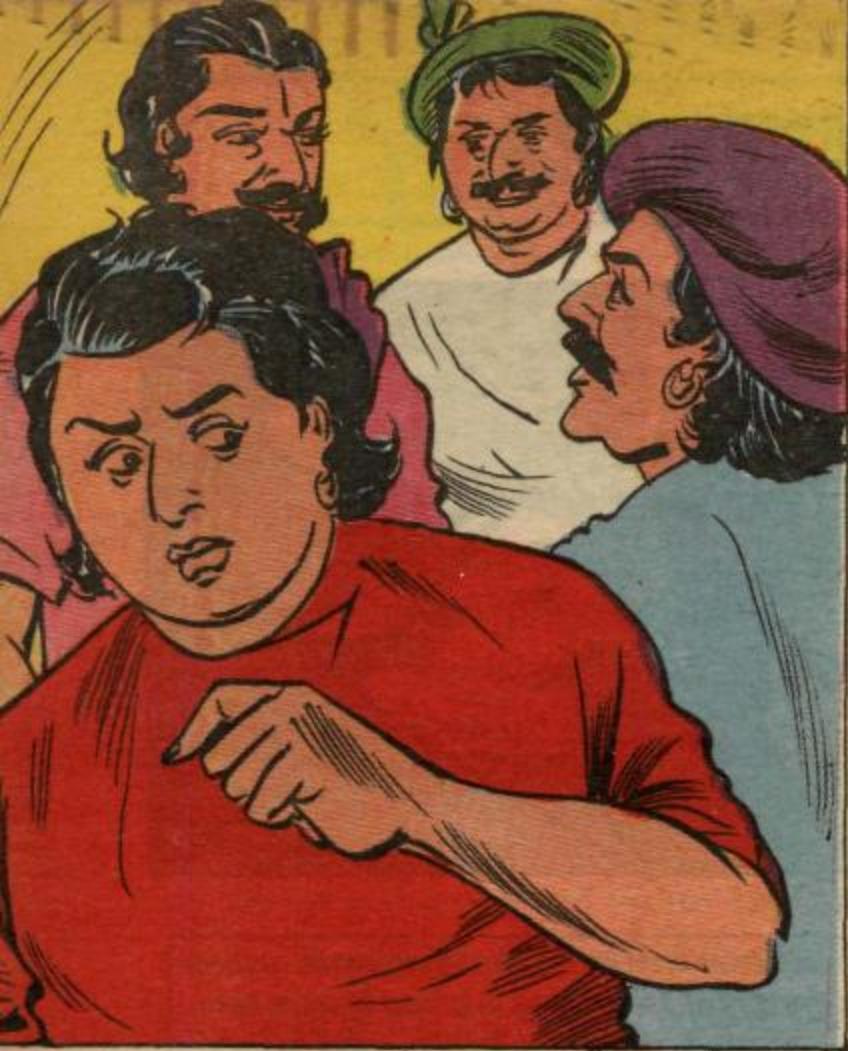
KING RAGHAVENDRA



(As the day of reckoning nears, King Raghavendra of Kanaka, who has already fallen ill, rushes through the construction of the Ganesha temple. On the day of its opening, a grand feast is held. The king is sad that Ramayya, the brahmin boy who had pronounced a curse on him, is still missing. He had a hope that the boy would turn up, in which case he could apologise to him for his unkind act which had led to the curse. The only hope now for the king is the rare herb that physician Kamejana has asked for. But that is available only in the hermitage of Damana, who is generally feared as another Sage Durvasa. Time ticks..)

According to the Brahmin boy's curse, the last day of life on earth for King Raghavendra had dawned. The well-known physician, Kamejana, could suggest only one cure for the king's illness—a herb from the hermitage of Damana. The very mention of the sage's name sent a chill down the spine of everyone present in the king's bedchamber. It would be like putting one's head into the lion's mouth. But time was running out fast, and something had to be done before night. One of the

king's trusted guards, Suman, is picked up to go to the hermitage. Kamejana gave him a description of the herb. Sage Yoganand, who had reached the palace to give Raghavendra the moral courage to meet his fate, called the guard and whispered into his ears: "When you approach Damana, don't straightway ask for Sugandha. Tell him how grievously ill the king is, so that he would want to help him in this hour of calamity. When he asks you what help he could extend, only then



should you ask for the herb."

Suman started in the king's own chariot driven by Ramu, and raced to the hermitage. Meanwhile, everyone in Kanaka prayed that the herb be brought in time to save the life of their beloved king. King Raghavendra himself tried to put on a cheerful face, but in his heart of hearts, he was feeling miserable. One can only imagine the agony in a person who knows that he has not another day to live. Queen Savitri, too, was greatly perturbed. For her husband's sake, she put out a faint smile. Prince Raghu was too young to understand what was going on,

except that something was terribly wrong with his father.

That day, time stood still in the entire kingdom. Two months ago, nobody had a good word for the king, but now everyone was praying for him. People gathered in groups and remained talking about their king in hushed tones. In one group of four men, three of them were talking, while the fourth person was silent and keenly listening to their conversation. In fact, he had just joined the group. He was rather surprised to see them praise the king and appeared quite angry with them. One of the three men stared at this quiet person, who looked like a boy in his late teens, and asked, "What do you say? Will our king survive?"

He looked at them scornfully and said gruffly, "Remember, he is under a curse!" Without saying anything more, he moved away from them.

The man who had asked for his feelings turned to the other two. "Did I say anything wrong?" The others shrugged their shoulders, their faces remaining expressionless.

The boy walked away, feeling indignant and at the same time confused. After walking for some distance, he stopped and stood aghast



at what he saw. By now some people seemed to have recognised him and were gesturing to others to look at him. The boy was surprised to see a grand temple some distance away from him. He walked towards the temple and realised it was a Ganesha temple. He entered and worshipped for some time. He then went round the entire temple and was overjoyed. When he came out, he found people had gathered near the temple and were just staring at him.

As he was about to leave, two guards blocked his way. Two men, who had come with them, pointed at the boy. "There he is!"

The guards went up to him and said, "Please come with us. The king wants to see you."

The boy asked bewildered, "Me? Why? Does he want to kill me?"

Just then, a man from the crowd stepped forward. "Please don't say that!" he said aloud. "The king has been searching for you ever since you went away after cursing him. He gave a grand feast two days ago when this temple was opened. He made sincere efforts to reach you, to invite you to the feast. Tell me, if he really wanted to kill you, would he have thought of inviting you to the feast?"



The boy was none other Ramayya, who had cursed the king two months ago. He did not answer the question posed by the man, but quietly went with the guards.

When they reached the palace, he was escorted to the king's chamber. On seeing him, Raghavendra asked him to sit by his side, which he did quietly. "Where had you been, my child?" said the king, full of remorse. "All these days I had been searching for you, for I wanted to apologise for the irreparable loss I had caused you. Please pardon me!" The king's eyes were moist with tears.





The brahmin boy had, in the least, expected such kindness from the king. He never thought the king would make him sit by his side and offer apologies so emotionally. He did not utter a word. The king continued. "I'm grateful to you for cursing me, my child." The words surprised the boy even more, and he stared at the king with wonder-struck eyes. "But for your curse, I would never have realised what my duties are towards my subjects. All the love and affection I'm now getting from my people are only because of your curse. But for the curse, I don't think I would have ever had the

privilege of meeting the esteemed sage Yogananda."

At that very moment, Yogananda who had gone to console the queen entered the room and at once recognised the boy. On seeing him, Ramayya got up and prostrated before him. The sage blessed him. "You've come at last, Ramayya! The king has been desperately wanting to meet you and apologise to you."

Seeing the calm and serene face of the sage, and noticing the pathetic condition of the king, all the hatred and fury which had welled up in his heart slowly melted away. Ramayya was now feeling disturbed over the king's tragic state of affairs. For the first time since his arrival in the palace, Ramayya spoke. In a tear-choked voice, he said, "Your Majesty! Had you been so kind-hearted that day when I came to you for help, all this would not have happened."

The king nodded his head in acceptance. "I now hold myself responsible for your impending death," Ramayya continued. "O king! I didn't have any feeling in my heart when I cursed you that day. Now, all of a sudden, I'm filled with an unknown sorrow."

"Your act of cursing me is completely justified, my child. I did



commit a crime by refusing help which I could have easily rendered. I have been solely responsible for causing the death of your father, and I deserve this punishment. In fact, I deserve to be cursed by all my subjects, as I had been unjust to them, by not paying any heed to their grievances and problems. When I think of my inexcusable behaviour towards the people, I realise how cruel a ruler I had been!" The king covered his face with his hands.

Ramayya realised that the king had undergone a conspicuous change in these two months. He just stood there not knowing what to do or say. The king asked him where he had been all these days. "Your majesty, I lost my mother when I was barely three. After her death, my father had been everything to me and when he also died, I couldn't bear the loss. Fed up with life, that night itself, I left for the 'Kataka' forest (that separated the kingdoms of Kanaka and Chanda) to lead the life of an ascetic. All these days, I remained in that forest." Ramayya hesitated to say anything more.

The king smiled. "I know, you returned today to see if your curse was coming true, didn't you, Ramayya?"



"I knew that not many in my neighbourhood would recognise me, as I was not very much around to make myself familiar to them. The people who flocked around me that night when I cursed you were from houses close to the palace, and even they would find it difficult to recognise me, as two months had gone by. That's how I made up my mind to return to the kingdom. I was, therefore, surprised when I heard people praising you, holding you in high esteem. I was also attracted by the Ganesha temple you had built in atonement of your sins. When I came out, your guards ap-





proached me." Ramayya went on to confess that he had determined to end his own life after witnessing the death of the king.

"That you shall never do, Ramayya," said the king, now sitting up in bed and catching hold of the boy's hands. "You loved your father, didn't you? Do you think he would be happy to see you rashly end your life? If not for my sake, you must live to achieve all the dreams your father had for you," Raghavendra asserted.

"He's right, Ramayya," said Yogananda. "You must live like a brahmin and not as an ascetic. Do all

that is destined for a noble brahmin to do. Retiring to the forest and leading the life of an ascetic can be done when you're old. Now is not the time."

Just then, Prince Raghu came into the room. Seeing Ramayya, he innocently asked his father, "Is he another doctor trying to cure your illness, father?"

Raghavendra smiled. "He's the doctor who will give me permanent relief from all my sufferings, my son!"

Raghu went to Ramayya. "Please make him all right. I want him to play with me like before."

Ramayya forced a smile and took pity on the little boy. After he had gone away, he said, "In my anger, Your Majesty, I did not realise that I was doing a great injustice to the queen and the prince who did not commit any crime."

Just then, Queen Savitri came in and pleaded with Ramayya to take back his curse. She even requested him to say whether he knew of any remedy for the king's illness.

Ramayya did not have the slightest idea, but the queen was adamant. She would not let him go unless he gave an answer. Sage Yogananda and others tried hard to pacify the



Queen and send her back to her chambers.

Ramayya could not see the pitiable sight, and he rushed out of the palace.

It was now almost time for the sun to set. Still there was no sign of Suman the guard. Everyone was impatiently waiting for his return. Even the chariot that had taken him had not come back. Then, suddenly, people saw the chariot racing along towards the palace. They were horrified that it did not carry the charioteer or the guard. A pall of gloom fell all over. The fate of their king was now sealed!

News reached the palace about the empty chariot. The queen nearly fainted, and the king was petrified. What had happened to Suman and Ramu? Only Sage Yogananda could offer an explanation. He had the powers to guess what would have happened. "There's nothing in this world that you're not aware of, O sage!" said the king. "Pray, tell me, what has happened to them?"

"All right, Raghavendra, I shall tell you what happened to Suman and Ramu. Listen. They reached the hermitage of Sage Damana, where Ramu accompanied Suman to get hold of the herb. Much to their joy,



they located the herb easily; unfortunately, the sage was not in the hermitage. They impatiently waited for his return, but he did not turn up for a long time. They were afraid they might be late in getting back to the palace. Still they waited, but there was no sign of the sage. Finally, they decided to pluck the herb and hurry back. As luck would have it, as they were plucking the *Sugandha*, Damana returned and was terribly outraged to see them plucking the plant without his consent. He did not wait for any explanation, but cursed them to turn to stones so that they could do no more mischief in their





life. Terrified at this sight, the horses ran away dragging the chariot and reached here."

Before Yogananda could say anything more, a guard went up to him and said softly, "That brahmin boy, Ramayya, wishes to see you in private. He's waiting outside the palace."

The sage excused himself from the king and rushed outside. He knew how upset the boy was when he witnessed the agony of Queen Savitri, and how he had rushed out of the palace. Somehow, he had a soft corner for the boy.

On seeing the sage, Ramayya

prostrated before him once again. "O sage! I want to help the king, and I don't mind even sacrificing my life. How I wish I could take back my curse! I might have succeeded if I had attempted it before the curse had started affecting the king. Please tell me what I can do. What should I do?" The boy fell at his feet and grabbed them as if he was desperate.

Yogananda raised him to his feet and affectionately patted him on his back. "All right, I shall send you on an errand. I'm not certain whether you'll succeed in your mission. But that's the only resort left." He then told Ramayya of what had happened to Suman and Ramu. "I shall arrange for a chariot to take you to the hermitage. It will then depend on your ability to secure the herb, *Sugandha*, from the sage and rush back to reach here at least one hour before midnight. Let's all hope the king may not breathe his last before that and he will live till then." He advised Ramayya how he should tackle the sage.

It was another chariot that now went to the hermitage this time. It reached there a little after dusk. Fortunately, the sage had not retired for the night, and he came out on hearing a chariot stopping near the



hermitage. Ramayya ran to him and first prostrated before him and then caught hold of his legs. "O revered sage! You must save me!"

"Tell me, who're you? And what has brought you here?" said Damana as he raised the boy to his feet. Ramayya revealed his identity and told him how his curse had affected the king and how the king was now a thoroughly reformed person, full of remorse, and that he should be saved at any cost.

Damana was surprised that such a young brahmin boy had acquired enough powers to pronounce a curse—that, too, on a king. He sympathised with him, especially because of the tragedies he had to face at a very young age. He also took pity on the king. Ramayya almost felt that he had won his mission and that the sage might help him. But, he had an objection to Ramayya plucking the herb after sunset!

"O sage, *Sugandha* alone will cure the king, and he has not many hours left on this earth," pleaded Ramayya with the sage.

Damana thought for a while. "If you pluck the plant now, another one will not grow there again!" the sage warned him. "You may be able



to save the king, but not anyone else after that."

"We must save the king, O sage!" pleaded Ramayya once again, very pathetically. "We can only hope that no one in the kingdom will need this herb for many years to come. After all, the king's illness was caused because of my curse. O sage! May I take it as if I've your consent to pluck the plant? Time is running out and I must rush back."

The sage led him to the sprawling compound of the hermitage and showed him the plant. He plucked it by its roots. Before he climbed on to the chariot, Ramayya once again



prostrated before Damana and took leave of him.

"Ramayya! If you ever care to learn more about herbs, you're welcome to come over here and stay with me," said the sage. There was no trace of his legendary ire on his face. In fact, he was smiling when the chariot moved away from the hermitage.

As people had seen Ramayya going in a royal chariot, they had lined up the streets in an anxious wait for him. So, when they saw the chariot rushing towards the palace—this time with the driver and the rider—a cheer arose from the crowd and it was echoed up to the palace gates.

Yogananda was at the steps to receive Ramayya, who reverentially placed the plant in the sage's hands. Kamejana was behind him and the herb was passed on to him. The

physician rushed to the royal kitchen to prepare the potion for the king.

"I shall meet the king tomorrow," said Ramayya. "You must now permit me to go home."

Yogananda smiled. "Yes Ramayya, now that you've ensured a re-birth for the king I shall wait to see you receive the king's blessings."

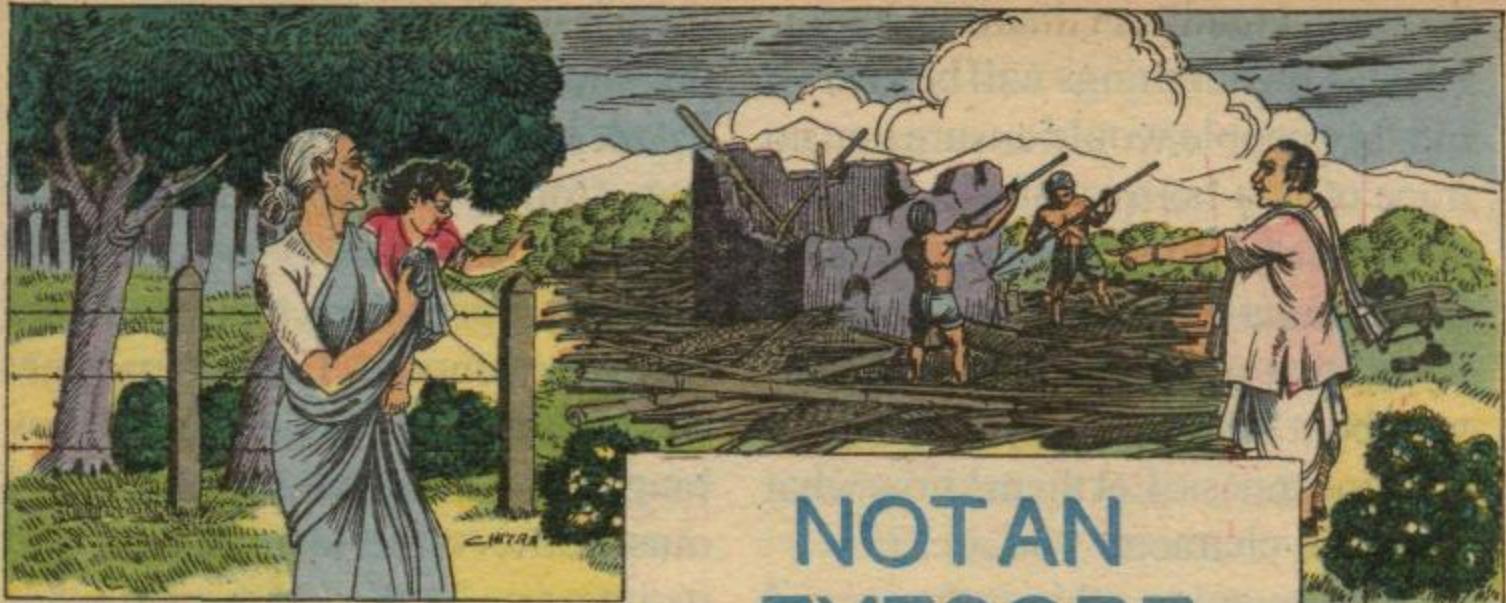
Ramayya left the palace happy and contented. Didn't he take back his curse in some way?

Sage Suryananda who was narrating the story to his disciples, concluded thus: "So, you see the need to lead a virtuous life. Whether you be an ordinary person or the ruler of a kingdom, one must be virtuous and carry out one's duties and responsibilities to the satisfaction and happiness of others. Always love others, help others, as it is only then that a person can survive in life."

(Concluded)

V. Rajesh





NOT AN EYESORE

Paramanand was a wealthy land lord. His neighbour was Seethamma, who had her hut near his palatial house. He did not like that at all. It was like the pox mark on a beautiful face. He somehow could not reconcile to the fact that such a lowly hut should exist right in front of his house. He planned to acquire that place, and pack off Seethamma from there, so that he could demolish her hut. For days together he wondered what strategy he should employ to send her away from that place.

He sent for the old woman. "Can't you see how ugly it looks to have a thatched roof in front of my house?" he asked her. "It's better that you vacate the place at the earliest."

She was not willing to agree to his suggestion. She told him that, though

a small unassuming hut, it was there that her ancestors had been born and died. How could she consider it as an eyesore? And just because it was being demanded by someone wealthy, she was not ready to vacate and give up the place.

"Hey, woman, I'm not asking for it free," Paramanand tried to pacify her. "I shall give you a good price. You take the money and put up a hut somewhere else."

"Sir, that hut is my only possession," protested Seethamma. "If I sell it away, where do I and my little grandson go? For generations, my people had been living here, and for me it's like a palace. There's no question of disposing it off!"

Paramanand now changed his tactics. He tried to threaten her. "If you don't vacate it by tomorrow

evening, I shall see that it is demolished. All your things will be thrown out. My people would ensure that no trace of you both is left here."

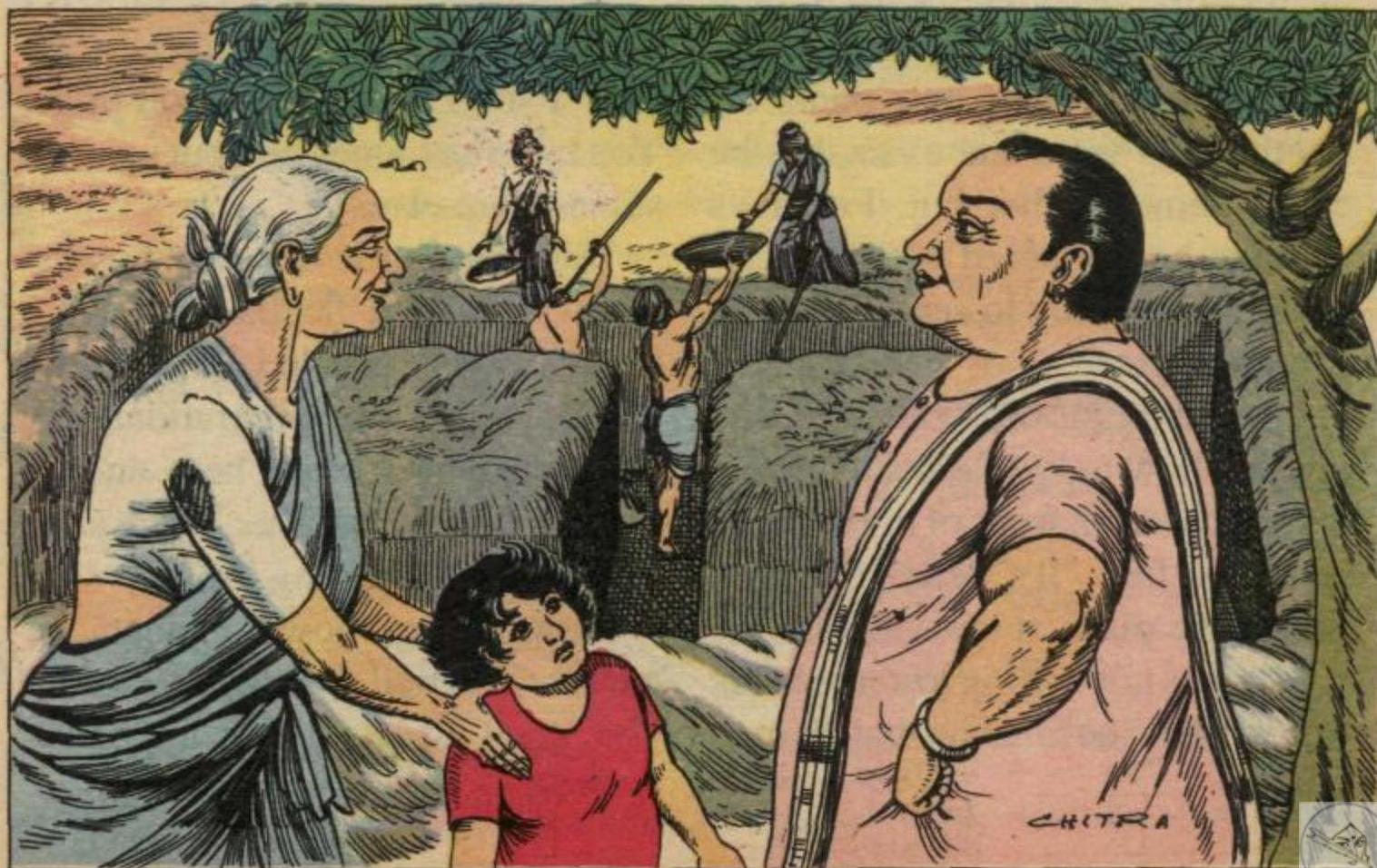
"Don't try to scare me, sir," said Seethamma nonchalantly. "You may try all that on anybody else. I shall go about telling everybody about your meanness. Let them know what kind of a character you are."

Next evening, things happened the way Paramanand had planned. His goondas came and demolished the hut, and threw out whatever they found inside. They even harassed the old woman and her grandson and forced them to leave the place.

Seethamma approached the elders of the place and complained to

them how she had been driven out of her ancestral home. They convened a *panchayat* and sought an explanation from Paramanand. "The old woman's son had borrowed five hundred rupees from me. He did not repay the amount. I didn't even get any interest all these five years. How long can I wait for my money? I must retrieve the loan amount and its interest. As the old woman cannot repay the amount, this is the only way I can get hold of my money. That's why I asked her to vacate her hut." He then showed them some document in support of his argument.

It was actually a forged paper. But the elders and some of the promi-



inent people believed what had been written in the document and decided the issue in favour of Paramanand. Poor Seethamma! She moved out to the outskirts of the village, put up a hut, and began living there with her grandson.

Soon afterwards, Paramanand made plans to build a pucca house where Seethamma's hut had stood. The men started digging the place for the foundation. He was surprised to see Seethamma and her grandson watching the work going on there. "Have you come to pick up a quarrel with me?" he asked her.

"Why should I quarrel with you, sir?" Seethamma replied very courteously. "As you're digging for a foundation, I just want some earth from this place. After all, my ancestors had lived here for long. Here, I've brought a basket. You may yourself fill it up, and I shall go away with it."

Paramanand could have no objection to her request. "You only want some earth? Give me the basket. I shall fill it up for you."

He did that and was about to heave the basket on to her head. But he could not even lift it. He stood bewildered.

"See! You can't even lift this much of earth. How're you then going to dig all that earth where my hut stood?" Seethamma laughed derisively.

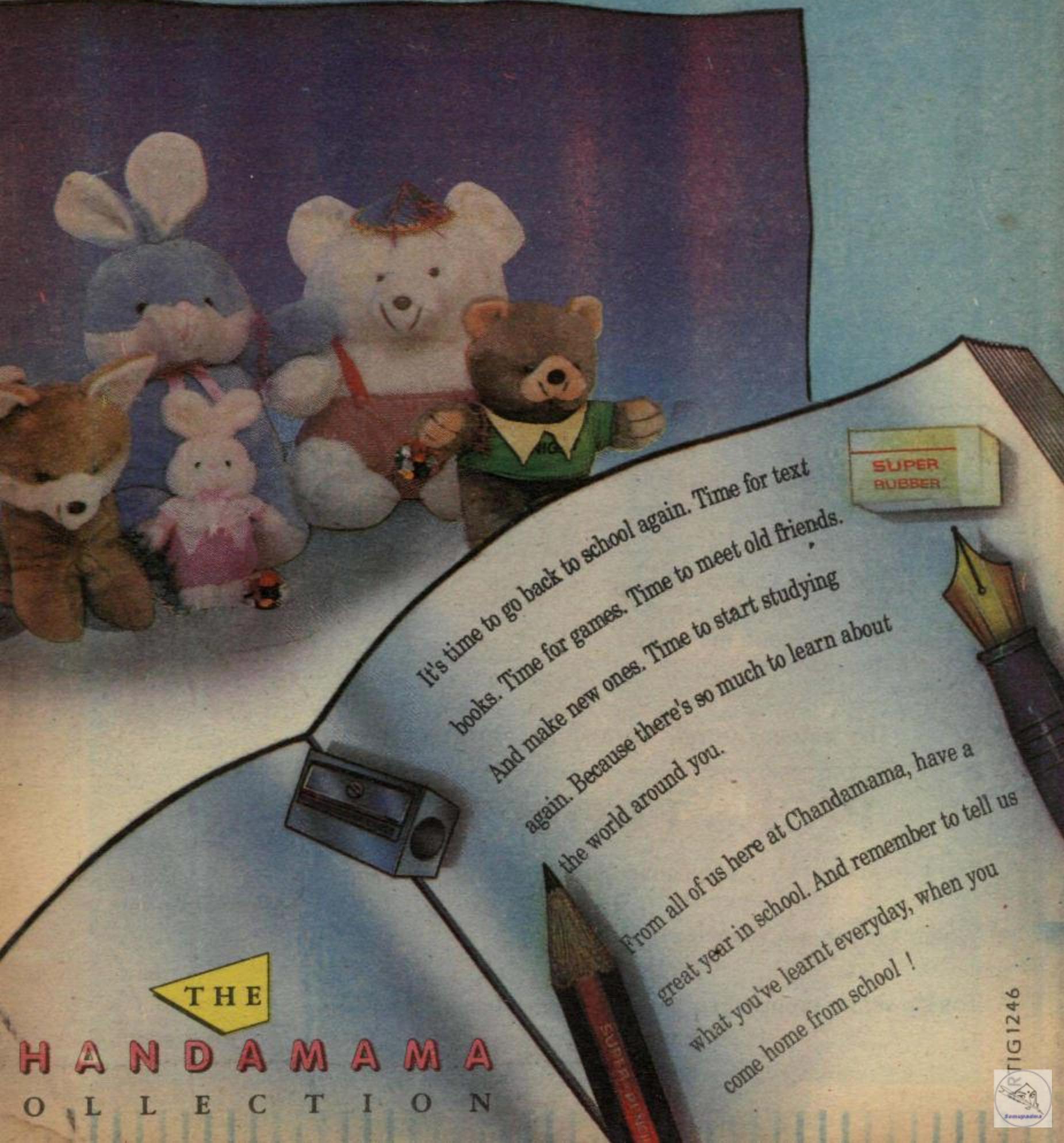
Paramanand now realised his folly and the injustice he did to Seethamma. "Please forgive me, Seethamma!" he said with folded hands. "I know how unjust I was to you. You may take back your place. I shall construct a pucca house for you at my expense."

Soon he had a house constructed in the same plot in front of his house and asked Seethamma and her grandson to stay there for ever.



Say "Hello" to text books and friends
'Cause School days are here again
Have a great year and all the best
From Wobbit, Coon and the rest!





THE

HANDAMAMA COLLECTION

It's time to go back to school again. Time for text books. Time for games. Time to meet old friends. And make new ones. Time to start studying again. Because there's so much to learn about the world around you.

From all of us here at Chandamama, have a great year in school. And remember to tell us what you've learnt everyday, when you come home from school !

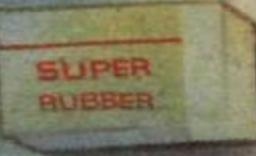
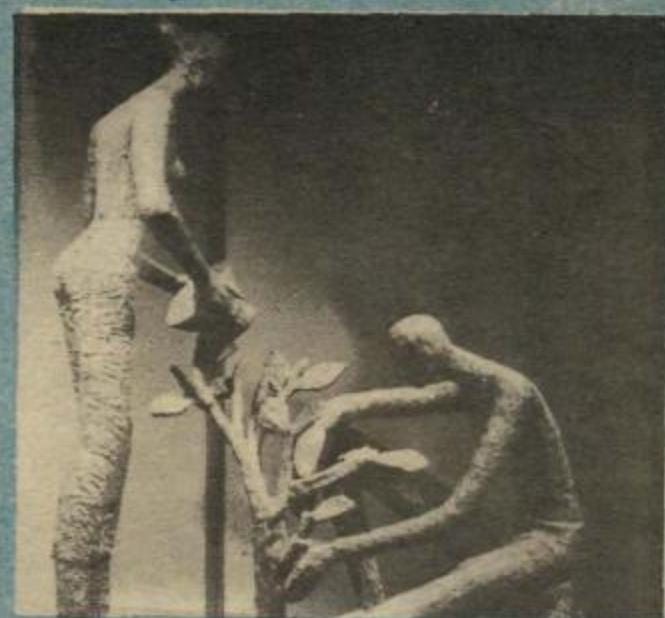


PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST



Mahantesh C. Morabad



Mahantesh C. Morabad

Can you formulate a caption in a few words, to suit these pictures related to each other? You may write it on a post card and mail it to Photo Caption Contest, Chandamama, to reach us by the 20th of the current month. A reward of Rs. 100/- will go to the best entry which will be published in the issue after the next.

The Prize for May '95 goes to :-

MISS SAMYUKTHA C

137, Pithapuram Palace
Kotagiri Road
Coonoor - 643101

The winning entry : "CHAINED", "CHARMED"

PICKS FROM THE WISE

The true work of art is but a shadow of the divine perfection.

- Michael Angelo

Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise.

- Gray

The slowest in promising is always the most faithful in fulfilling.

- Rousseau



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we're all game for it

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EAGLE FLASK INDUSTRIES LTD.

There's a lot you can do with Eagle

To win a surprise game, match the names of Eagle Water Bottles with the phrases given below. And get this coupon stamped from your nearest Eagle outlet.

<input type="checkbox"/> Brooks	<input type="checkbox"/> A river in South America
<input type="checkbox"/> Amazon	<input type="checkbox"/> A river in Russia
<input type="checkbox"/> Congo	<input type="checkbox"/> Movement of sea
<input type="checkbox"/> Volga	<input type="checkbox"/> Streams of water
<input type="checkbox"/> Waves	<input type="checkbox"/> A country in West-Central Africa

Name: B'day:

Address:

Entries must reach the following address before 31/8/95. Eagle Flask Industries Ltd., Eagle Estate, Talegaon-410507. Dist.Pune. Tel: 02114-22321-25. Fax 02114-22676.

Winners will be intimated by post.

DART/EF/3730



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